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at last

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A neu-romance
with cyberpunks
and magic

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UPFRONT

HI HAL

Click click, brrr brrr. Welcome to our new section on computer games where the emphasis will be on strategy/management games rather than shoot 'em ups. The decision to go down this road was based partly on reader response (and I would personally like to thank that reader), together with the lack of publications covering this area in any depth. Sure, there are more computer game magazines than nuts in Brazil, but how many cater to the serious gamer? After ploughing through Space Invader (Mk 99) features and a lay-out that looks like a chimp has been let loose with a paintbox program, maybe you'll come across a feature that interests you. To be honest, our feeling is that computer games will never replace boardgames though we recognise that they have something unique to offer, especially to the solitaire gamer.

To accommodate this new section we have added an extra eight pages, as promised, and introduced some colour. So whatever your preference, you're a winner.

SPACED OUT

Contrary to what some readers think (see Rebound), we don't sit down at the start of each issue and decide how many pages we are going to allocate for General Games, Wargames, and so on. Like (some) newspapers report news, we report on the new releases. We can't cover games that do not, as yet, exist. Some months there will be more new wargames, hence that section will be expanded. If you're not a wargamer you could try asking for a refund. But believe me, it isn't worth it.

As the editor, I should point out that I have little interest in wargames or role-games. I fail to see, though, why readers interested in those areas should not be catered for. The argument against is that there are enough magazines doing this already. Like the aforementioned computer game mags, this is simply not the case. There are no UK based (board) wargames magazines, nor is there an independent rolegame mag in this country. So lighten up a little, guys. There's room for everybody at this table.

LET THE PEOPLE SPEAK

The giving of awards has been with us since Norman Neanderthal got a prize for the best kept cave. Like compiling top tens, awards are fun. Who can honestly say that they've never dozed off while trying to think of the all-time greatest films/books/lingerie? Or induced a nightmare attempting to select an England cricket team?

Unfortunately, though, most accolades are now doled out by committees, usually composed of the sort of guys who, when you see them in a smoke filled room, you pray there's a fire. Naturally this leads to cynical hacks writing sarcastic articles questioning the integrity of such prizes. The Oscars, and more recently, the Booker Prize, have both had doubts cast on their validity.

What brings the subject into territory covered by this magazine are the 'Game of the Year' award in Germany and the Origins awards in America. Gratifying as it was to see such a fine company as Avalon Hill scoop up so many trophies at Origins, essentially their meaninglessness is only equalled by the pomposity with which they are awarded, so much so that we didn't even bother to print them in full. In fact, we're not going to mention them ever, ever, again.

On then to the 'Spiel des Jahres', which is a different kettle of *knackwurst* altogether. This is an award which means something. What it means is sales of at least 100 000 to the recipient. The award is presented by the Minister of Sport, the national press give it heavy coverage, the logo is printed on the box, and everyone lives happily ever after. Until now. In the past the jury have made some brave choices: *Scotland Yard*, *Heimlich & Co*, *Railway Rivals*, and *Consulting Detective* were all worthy winners. Recently, though, it seems that the big guys don't want to give up the ball. Ravensburger, Schmidt *et al* just pass it around between them.

The jury's argument is that small companies simply couldn't cope with the demand. Phooey. Just think of the collateral such an award would provide. An increased print run would not cause too many heart attacks at the bank. When *Barbarossa* scooped the award last year the rumour was it was given to help publishers ASS out of a financial bind. If you could find one man and a dog to agree with the verdict you were doing well.

This year's recipient *Café International* (see review, page 10) threatens to undermine the entire process altogether. Already there is talk that publishers Mattel received it because somehow they 'deserved it' (not for the game, but for being Mattel). Even in such a lean year it is hard to see how this game gets it on merit. But whatever one's subjective feelings justice must clearly be *seen* to be done. Surely there must be a way whereby a more popular voice can be heard?

To show the way, *Games International* is organising *its* own poll. So there. In the next issue there will be a non-riggable ballot paper enabling you to cast your vote for the Game of the Year in each of our four categories. Any game which has been released in the UK during the past year will be eligible, plus a few more that we have introduced such as *6-Tage Rennen*. If for some reason you are incapable of remembering all the games that meet such criteria, don't feel too inadequate; we'll be publishing a list of some of the likely contenders, and just to spice things up a little, we'll be asking you to select the Turkey of the Year. Voice of the people? Do me a favour. GI

CUTTING MISTAKES...

In a 30-minute RUNEQUEST battle (Chaosium) involving 6,000 armored, experienced warriors using Great Axes, more than 150 men will decapitate themselves and another 600 will chop off their own arms or legs... (~John Rees)



This cartoon is taken from *Murphy's Rules*, and is reproduced by permission. *Murphy's Rules* is published by Steve Jackson Games, price £3.95.

GI NOT BI SHOCK

Despite the dateline on the front cover, we are not going bimonthly: this was simply a catching up process.



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Editor: *Brian Walker*Production Editor: *Paul Mason*Illustrators: *Ralf Kahlert, Lee Brimmicombe-Wood*

Contributors: *Mike Siggins, Charles Vasey, Ian Livingstone, John Harrington, Dave Berry, James Wallis, Philip Murphy, Richard Ashley, Ellis Simpson, John Scott, Mike Jarvis, Steve Jones, Kevin Warne, Mark Green, George Crawshaw, Alan Kennedy, Ian Marsh, Mike Woodhouse*

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ISSUE NINE

Lots of new introductions this month; firstly we, er, proudly present Mr Charles 'Crazy' Vasey, publisher of a rabid organ known as *Perfidious Albion*. To give you an idea of the intellectual rigour you can expect, Charles kicks off with a review of **Thomas the Tank Engine**. Maybe, though, we should have given this game to Ian Bowen. What Ian doesn't know about trains simply isn't worth knowing. Indeed, his knowledge of the golden age of steam is only exceeded by his expertise on things that didn't happen thousands of years ago, which is why we gave him **Excalibur**.

What is it with 'Steves'? They always seem to come in pairs. First Jackson and now Jones, of whom we have two. The Steve Jones without the middle initial, is of Australian origin and an expert on any game that lasts more than five hours (add a couple more if he's playing), as his excellent piece on **1830** proves. The closest connection Steve G Jones (who was credited as Steve Jones last issue) has with Australia was the day he was mistaken for Edna Everage while out shopping in the Bull Ring. This does not invalidate his reviews in any way.

No problems with the next name. There's only one of its kind in the entire country and it belongs to former *Games & Puzzles* stalwart, George Crawshay. George, who will be writing for us on a regular basis, starts off with some tips, and an illustration, on how to convert **Crude/McMulti** into a six player game.

Dave Berry continues to deny that he is, in fact, an unemployed pop star. Like your velvet flares Dave, this just won't wash. Your Design Notes feature, though, would make a good calling card should you ever wish to 'sign off'. Regulars Mike Siggins and John Harrington take a step sideways into the world of scrolls and icons, aided by cuddly Kevin Warne, and Mike Woodhouse – the most interesting man in Charlton. Famed for his cricket stories, he thought we wouldn't notice the assertion, in his analysis of **Waterloo**, that Napoleon was 'clean bowled' by Wellington. Whaddya think an editor's for, Woody?

In our GI interview say hullo to Stephen Baker, designer of **HeroQuest**, while in Forum, a new feature, we ask various members of the games business for their views on THE GREAT ISSUES OF THE DAY. Like all such features in GI, it will

Star Ratings

Top class game. Highly recommended

Very good game. Worth buying


Worth a look

**

Only if the subject interests you



A true turkey

appear when a relevant topic crops up, rather than simply for the sake of it. 

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REVIEWS

GENERAL GAMES

CHOICE

DESIGNED BY
SID SACKSONPUBLISHED BY
HEXAGAMES

PRICE £8.99

Yet another offering from Sid Sackson's classic book *Gamut of Games*. Like the previous offering from that tome *Black Monday*, *Choice* is also published by Hexagames, leaving one again to lament the fact that Sid has to go to Germany to find a publisher.

Like most of Sid's games this is easy to learn yet offers considerable replay value. The basic premise is that you roll five dice and place one aside, making sure

you record the number on the score sheet provided. From the remaining four dice you choose two combinations and record them in the same way. On the following turns you do the same except you may choose a different fifth number up to a maximum of three. Each time you roll you must mark off one of your chosen three numbers. If none should appear then you, in effect, get a freebie, for the game ends as soon as you mark off one of these numbers for the eighth time. Of course you will be also marking off the combinations, hoping to record at least five ticks, which is the break even point. If you record more then you start scoring points according to difficulty (2 and 12 obviously score the most). If by the time you have rolled one of your three chosen numbers eight times, you haven't attained at least five on a combination, then you lose 200 points for each such failure. As you may have already gleaned, it's easier to come out minus than it is plus.

TRAVELLING COMPANION

Like all the games in the book you could probably make one up yourself. But here it comes smartly dressed up replete with

a plastic dome, which doubles as a container and shaker, and a pen and score pad – all of which makes it an ideal travelling companion. It's playable solitaire too. The optimum number of players is difficult to determine as there is quite a bit of 'down time' when you're not involved. I would suggest four, or 400. The latter having the advantage that you could go to bed knowing that when you wake up it would be probably be your shake. The translated rules are pretty rough though doubtless they will be cleaned up on arrival. There is, however, an extraordinary omission from both the German and English rules: in the book the multi-player game differed from the solitaire game in that one player rolled the dice and *all* players had to use that roll. Its absence here is inexplicable for this a far better way of playing the game. I would suggest you regard this rule as mandatory, rather than optional. Highest score so far by team GI? 680. Beat that!

Brian Walker



CHARTS

General Games

- ① Black Monday (Hexagames)
- ② Pass the Pigs (MB)
- ③ Scrabble (Spears)
- ④ How to Host a Murder (Transatlantic Marketing)
- ⑤ Monopoly (Waddingtons)
- ⑥ Jenga (MB)
- ⑦ Gumshoe (Sleuth)
- ⑧ Mertwig's Maze (TSR)
- ⑨ Consulting Detective (Sleuth)
- ⑩ Die Macher (Hans im Glück)

Chart supplied by Just Games.

THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE

IN HOUSE DESIGN

PUBLISHED BY
WADDINGTONS

PRICE £4.95*
(small puffers)



Thomas the Tank Engine Game is for two to four players with ages from five to eleven. At a mere £4.95 from Waddingtons it represents a very acceptable way to introduce children to gaming. It has no military element but encourages tactical thinking and, most importantly, the huge popularity of Thomas the Tank Engine includes girls as well as boys in the potential market. (Indeed the first copy of this game I purchased was for my daughter.)

The game is played on a board about a foot square. The four engines start at the sheds and must get to the station around the various lines and branch lines. There are three principle junctions and here may stand (in imposing black) the ample figure of The Fat Controller (the worthy Sir Topham Hatt). Engines may not go down the line blocked by The Fat Controller. However, a player whose engine lands on a yellow space (of which there are a number) must move The Fat Controller to another junction. Coming at a strategic moment this can send one's opponents off around a loop-line. There are also a number of spaces with special effects 'Throw Again' and (very popular this one) 'Send any engine back to shed' are examples. Movement is regulated by a dice roll. Engines may pass each other but not occupy the same space.

The four engines provided are Thomas, Percy, James and Toby, and the only complaint among my nephews was that there was no Gordon, Henry or Edward (I'm a Troublesome Truck man myself). Naturally I had to point out that the game board displayed Thomas's branch line, not the main line where extremely important engines would operate. I felt there was a ground swell here for an expansion kit.

Among its intended market the game is a great success but is too simple other than for tinkering with by older gamers. Although, having said that, I have noticed it is a popular game for visitors to take down and play about with. Four stars and no mistaking.

Charles Vasey

PUFF PUFF

Undoubtedly a popular feature of Thomas the Tank Engine Game is the four little engine models executed in excellent detail in the predominant colour. The wheel arrangements are correct although it must be remarked that James The Red Engine (who is, you will remember, a Mixed Goods Engine) lacks his tender.

It should be noted that there is larger version of this game with different rules available at a price of £14.95. Though sadly, the Fat Controller appears to have gone AWOL - Ed

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GAME OF THE MONTH

LIARS DICE

DESIGNED BY
RICH BORG

PUBLISHED BY
MB (USA)

PRICE \$18

As the marketing manager of MB (UK) put it: 'How do you persuade people to pay £15 for a game containing a box full of dice?' A fair point, and probably the reason why the game was a flop in the US. And yet this is probably one of the finest family games that MB have ever done in their illustrious history. Value for money? In terms of sheer fun, *Liars Dice* is hard to beat, and what's that worth?

PEEK-A-BOO

Thirty-one dice or no, this game still arrives in a largish box. There *is* a board, although quite a small one, and this depicts a series of diamond shapes numbered from 1 to 20. The sequence is broken only by numbers 1 to 9 in green, which are also distinguishable by a star within the diamond shape.

Each player receives five dice and a large plastic shaker (this is a noisy game). After shaking the dice and banging them down on the table you then take a peek at the outcome. The first player then makes a bid. This he does by taking the special red die and placing it in one of the diamonds. If he thinks that there are a total of, say,



twelve 4s under all the cups, he turns the face of the red die to four and places this die on the diamond marked twelve.

The next player must raise the bid or challenge. To raise he simply turns the face of the die to 5 or 6, or, he moves the die round the board clockwise, to thirteen for instance, therefore indicating that he thinks there are now thirteen of something.

If he decides to challenge, all players lift their cups and the dice are counted. If there are *more* dice than the player bid, the challenger has to relinquish dice equal to the difference. If there are *less* dice than bid, then the challenged player must give up dice equal to the difference. If there are *exactly* the number of dice bid then all players, except the player who got it right, must give up one.

The winner is the player with the last remaining die.

SHOW AND TELL

The joker in this box is that one face of the die contains a star, which is considered wild when the dice are exposed.

You are also able to bid these stars on the aforementioned green numbers which appear on the board between the ordinary numbers. Thus if you were in a tough spot and forced to bid at least 14 of something

(or challenge), you could bid that there were eight stars showing instead. Not that that's necessarily easier.

There is also the 'show and reroll' rule which enables you show at least one of the die you have just rolled, and then reroll the rest. Show any that you have of the number you are bidding for, roll the dice, then, in the time honoured manner, hope for the best. This is best used when you think you might be challenged and don't have much of anything. Wimps who couldn't bear the thought of a challenge (hullo, Mike Siggins) will probably use this rule as a matter of course.

Like many of the best bluffing games, an understanding of human nature goes a long way. A little knowledge of probability wouldn't go amiss either. But really, such assets are superfluous in terms of entertainment. Role-players, wargamers (even), and people who normally hate games can play, enjoy, and win this game. *Liars Dice*, entry into the hall of fame is yours, no die roll required.

Brian Walker

Available from: Gamescape, 333 Divisadero, San Francisco CA 94117, USA. ☎ (415) 621 4263. Visa and Mastercard accepted. Add \$6 for air mail, \$2 for surface.

CAFÉ INTERNATIONAL

DESIGNED BY
RUDI HOFFMAN

PUBLISHED BY
MATTEL

PRICE £15



It is oft said, though not by us, that every designer has but one game in him. In the case of Rudi Hoffman, though, this would appear to be the case, as each of his offerings deviate only slightly from his seminal *Ogalalla* (published in this country as *Blackfoot*). Doubly ironic, then, that this, his weakest offering, should win the coveted 'Game of the Year' award in Germany. Also rather embarrassing for yours truly who tipped the game to win several months ago and ended up being right for the wrong reasons. In every respect, save perhaps the graphics, this game is decidedly inferior to Rudi's own *Maestro*, published by Hans im Glück, a company somewhat smaller than Mattel, and thus less likely to win glittering prizes. As with all of Rudi's games we are talking pattern recognition here. In *Ogalalla* it was Indians, in *Maestro* it was musicians, in *Café International* it's tourists.



POLYGLOT PATTERNS

The board consists of 24 different tables representing 12 different nations. Players must try to occupy the four chair spaces around each table with two members each of the opposite sex, and of the requisite nationality. Like pigs, though, some tables are more sociable than others, meaning that other nationalities are allowed to sit there. Players start with five tiles which are replenished each turn, and try to place these in the most advantageous position points wise, which in this instance means completing one or more tables on your turn. An interesting deviation to this rather tedious process comes when you have to place tourists at the bar. This is done when you cannot place a tile. At first you gain points for every customer thus seated, though later you lose points as more tables become occupied.

In case you, the reader, have spent some time at the bar prior to reading this, let me clarify: your aim is to spot the most advantageous spot to place your tile. If unplaceable, you may win or lose points depending on the state of the game. Savvy? The only other variables to this pattern are the jokers. Unless you are playing with those lacking the gift of sight, it quickly becomes apparent that winning is heavily dependent on the luck of the draw. On the plus side, the artwork and the components are absolutely first class. Perhaps, somehow, the *Spiel des Jahres* jury became confused. Maybe they thought they were judging the comic of the year. If not, then they should all be given the red card. A greater case of 'bringing the game into disrepute' is hard to imagine.

Brian Walker

AUCTION

DESIGNER UNKNOWN

PUBLISHED BY
AVALON HILL

PRICE £14.75



I've always found auctions a lot of fun. You've spotted an item that you want desperately and you are waiting excitedly for its lot number to be called. You've decided how much you are prepared to bid for it although in your heart you know you will probably bid more for it in the heat

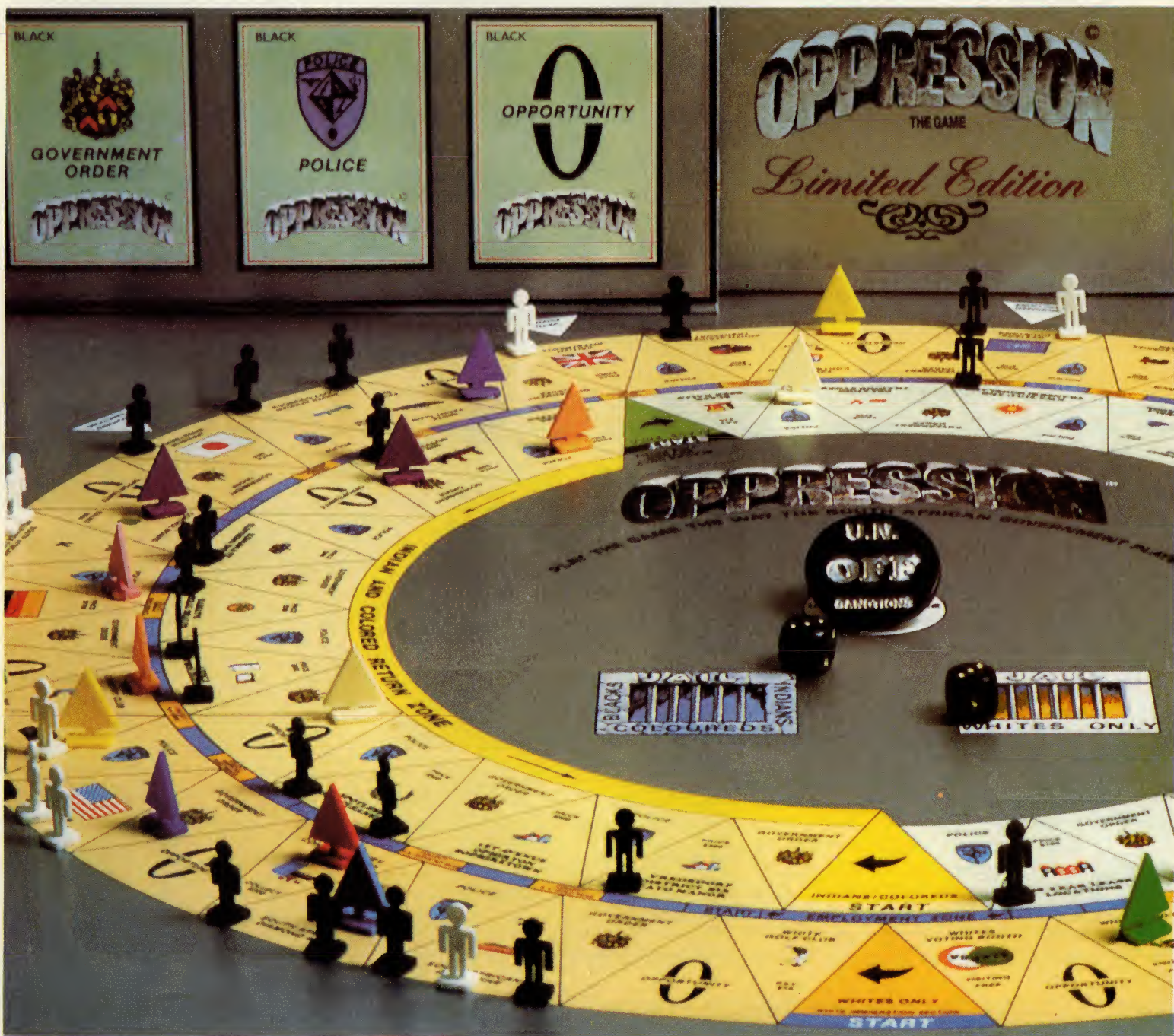
of the moment. You look around to see if anybody else is likely to show interest in the same lot, but nobody is giving anything away. Are you going to get the bargain of a lifetime, or is somebody else going to outbid you and ruin your day? The lot number is finally called and your heartbeat quickens. The bidding goes up in leaps and bounds and in a few moments it's all over and the lot is knocked down to the highest bidder, hopefully yourself. It's all thrilling stuff.

But tonight there is no auction and so out comes the boardgame of the same name. I've always been a fan of Avalon Hill, especially their general games. This one has been on their books a long time, however, and is not a new game. Formerly known as *High Bid*, it saw life back in 1965, when it was published by 3M, before their range was acquired by Avalon Hill.

The object of the game is to complete collections of rare items and make money buying and selling to other collectors. The winner will be the astute player who buys and sells at the right time so as to amass \$7500 worth of valuable goodies. Each player (up to four) starts with \$2000 with which to bid for lots. There are two packs of cards and, new to this edition, a rather superfluous board. One set of cards is the Auction pack which contains the antiques and also the important 'buyer' cards. Players start with six auction cards and one buyer card, but can acquire more during the bidding. The latter are useful in that they enable a player either to buy items from the board or, more importantly, use them as jokers to make up sets. The other pack contains the 'special value' cards (also a new addition) which affect the value of purchases – basically a questionable random factor.

Some say It's exciting
 Some say It's like playing a turbo-charged version of Monopoly
 Some say It's a game of skill
 Some say It's different, sharp, accurate and fast
 Some say It's definitely not boring
 Some say It's political, serious, and tickles the emotions
 Some say It is educational

YOU DECIDE

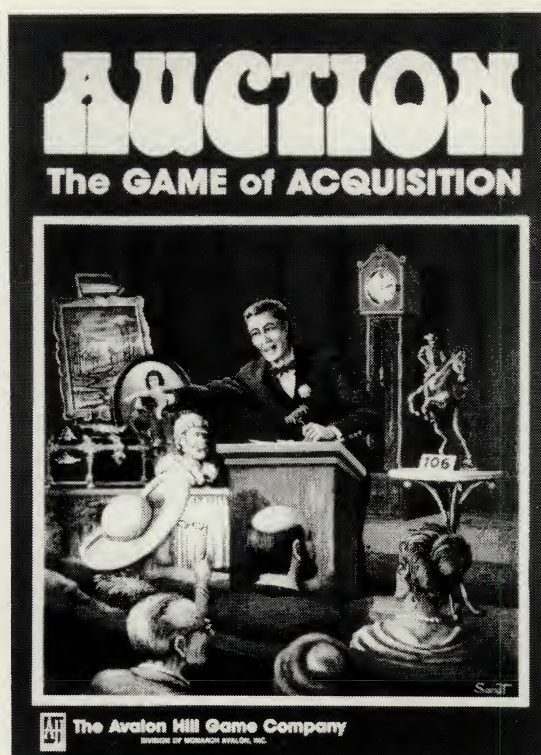


To start, the top card of the Auction pack is turned over and the opening bid is decided by the roll of a die. Players then bid away, trying if possible to complete sets. A successful bidder of a lot pays the bank and then has the option to sell up to three of his Auction cards to raise cash.

Alas, it's all a bit tedious after the first few lots, and we were quite relieved when somebody suddenly revealed their winning collection of jewellery.

The game could have been made more colourful, but the artwork on the cards is the same dull line drawings as in the original *High Bid*. And the new board is equally dull. As a person who enjoys going to auctions, I'm afraid I found this simulation rather disappointing despite its promise.

Ian Livingstone



EASY MONEY

DESIGNED BY
MICHAEL GREY

PUBLISHED BY
HASBRO BRADLEY

PRICE £19.95



It would have been great to make my debut for *Games International* with a rave review, but alas this is not to be, as *Easy Money* has nothing new to offer. It consists of a *Monopoly*-style board, three dice, some cards and lots of money. This money comes in smaller denominations than is required, and therefore has to be batched and banded into groups of ten to form 'wads'. For example, 10 notes of \$10 000 will form a 'wad' of \$100 000, and therefore it is these 'wads' that are used in play. This idea could have added a nice touch of authenticity to the game, but the two and a half hours it took to prepare the money soon soured my opinion on that front.

Easy Money is for two to four players. To play, each participant moves in turn, on the roll of two dice, and each turn affects one or all of the players. During the game you have the opportunity to speculate on Wall Street, gamble in Las Vegas or win

lotteries. The winner is the richest player when all the money in the bank (the centre of the board) has gone.

The big problem with this game is that it requires no skill, strategy or tactics: in fact no thought at all. You roll the dice, move, follow the instructions for the square, the next person rolls the dice, moves *ad infinitum*. *Easy Money* is, if anything, a kiddies' game. Although, having said that, a good many of them would consider it an insult to their intelligence.

The 13 year old who played with us was not impressed, and if any of your kids get it as a present, make sure *you* put the money into the 'wads' otherwise they will lose interest before they even start.

The verdict on *Easy Money*? If you like a game with a bit of challenge, forget it. Money was never this easy.

Alan Kennedy



EXCALIBUR

DESIGNED BY
JULIAN MUSGRAVE

PUBLISHED BY
WOTAN GAMES

PRICE £14.99



On receiving this game, I would have assumed that it was about the Arthurian mythos as described in Mallory. In fact, the title is highly misleading as the game is not about this subject, but is concerned with feudal microeconomics. Wotan had the title foisted on them by the company responsible for sales in Germany declaring it the second of the King Arthur series. The working title was Battleaxe, but to fit in with the Arthurian theme the game became **Excalibur**.

The game components are of a questionable quality: there are six sets of counters in shades that clash wonderfully, a board in a six-part jigsaw style that had bent up at the edges, a set of cards that suffer from the number of colours on them, and a rule book with some highly indistinct illustrations of the playing board. The only things to praise about the components are the stout box and the counter tray.

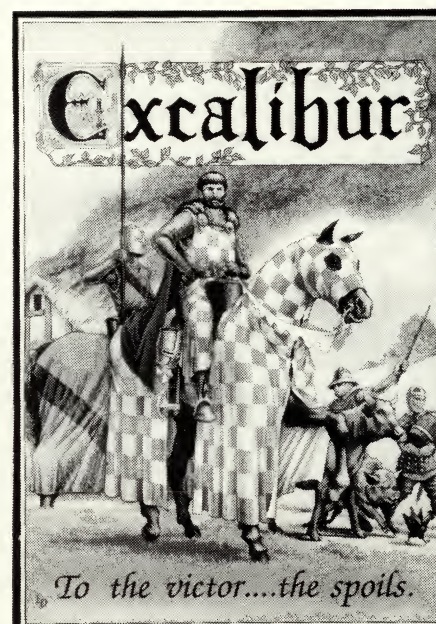
Apart from the illustrations, the rule book is tolerably laid out and contains some helpful play hints. The lack of an index is not too bad in a simple game and the examples are well described. The designer's notes, however, to one used to a more detailed section, are frankly useless.

The game involves a mix of management and combat. You have to obtain manors from which you obtain revenue, with which you buy troops or improve your manors to gain extra revenue. In the basic game, which to be frank is dull, the target is simply to reach a stated number of manors to become Warden of the county. This could take a long time, especially with a large number of players. In the advanced game, this is tempered by a system where you score Reverence points (Victory Points by any other name) when King Arthur visits the county and at the end of 10 years the person with the most RPs wins. The advanced game also throws in a religious option, whereby you can build churches or stone circles, to gain extra

RPs. Adding in the weather rules and castles, and you have a game that will last about three to four hours.

Unfortunately, while there is an interesting game in there somewhere, the concept has failed. The game suffers from a good deal of dependence on the actions of the first turn (Although the rule book does hint at this). Combat is overly simple. Both sides total up the strength of their pieces and roll a die. These totals are then compared and the losses to be taken occur. This usually leads to the stronger side being victorious and leaves little room for tactics, since pieces may only be retreated after three rounds of combat, by which time some losses will have been taken. Our group thought that the lack of tactical options and the near inevitability of the combat system were serious weaknesses.

The movement system was also criticised. With simultaneous movement, orders must be written down, and the map is not sufficiently well labelled for this to be done with ease. People were writing orders of the style: 'Highbury - milestone 2 to the north of it'. It doesn't seem right that knights and men-at-arms move at the



same rate - this point was much commented on.

All in all, I cannot recommend the game to the average games player. Those who continually tinker with games, however, will find hours of fun in dragging out the decent game which lurks deep within.

Iain Bowen

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TALISMAN CITY

DESIGNED BY
JERVIS JOHNSON

PUBLISHED BY
GAMES WORKSHOP

PRICE £7.99

This is the latest addition to the rapidly expanding **Talisman** game by Games Workshop, and if you don't think about how much the total game has cost, I am sure you will want to add this to your collection. This is only an expansion kit and cannot be used without the original set. None of the other three expansion kits are needed to use this one. You get another board, about half the size of the original, depicting the City which replaces the old City space. Unless you have a very large table, you may have to move to the floor to play. There are also well over 100 cards made up of 72 City cards to draw while in the City, plus seven adventure, three dungeon and 10 spells to add to existing packs. Once again the colour matching is bad, especially on the dungeon cards which have totally different designs. However, the graphics on all components are up to the usual high standard. You also get 20 purchase cards, five loan, five warrant, six character cards and pieces plus six extra bases. Believe me, the game is

large enough now to accommodate 12 players.

When a player lands on the City space, he can either continue on next turn (ignoring old encounters) or move through the gate to the Town square on the new board. On subsequent turns, players can move around the streets (11 areas) or enter 13 locations off the streets. The latter include the original Doctor, Alchemist and Enchantress, with many others. There are plenty of choices as you don't need exact rolls to enter locations. Great gains can be made in the City but watch out for the laws! There are 10, including no fighting or spells in the streets, no nasties such as trolls, ghouls, orcs and so on, and you must have money. Breaking the laws means a chance of meeting the Watch. Unless beaten (strength varies from four to 12) they throw you into the Donjon. It



can be difficult or expensive to get out of there. Some encounters force you to take a warrant card, which means you can be arrested any time, even by another player. Great fun!

Of the six new characters, only two can start a game. You can become one of the others by certain actions in the City. You lose your original character but keep all strength, craft, gold, lives, objects and followers unless alignment change forces discards. These new characters have extra abilities so are well worth trying for. Additional cards to existing packs are all interesting and help link this section to others. You can now purchase all varieties of equine, plus new things like doughnuts, dragon bones and very expensive full plate armour.

All in all, if you enjoy **Talisman** this is well worth adding as it is fun, although I found the rich had an easier time. It's that vagrancy law! A lot of time can be wasted in the City so only enter if you have a set purpose. The rules are fairly clear but you should remember that the Town square is a location and must be stopped at. Also, it isn't stated, but I assume that as a toad you can be arrested at any time for lack of money. Apart from the quibble of the non-matching backs and one card which had the wrong picture printed on it, the standard is high.

Richard Ashley

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THE GI INTERVIEW

*In this month's interview we talk to Stephen Baker, designer of **HeroQuest***

*The big question: how did **HeroQuest** evolve?*

'I was always interested in the fantasy genre from my days at Games Workshop. When I went to work for MB I discussed this with Roger Ford (head of Product Development at MB) and he gave me the go-ahead to develop the project with the proviso that it be kept simple enough to appeal to a large audience.'

How did Games Workshop get involved?

'Initially we just wanted them to do the plastic miniatures, but they've had so much experience in the fantasy field we decided to draw on their expertise.'

Were they involved in the actual design of the game?

'No. Their input in the basic version was the artwork and manufacture of the miniatures, though in the future that will change.'

In what way?

'They will be producing **Advanced HeroQuest** which adds complexity to the basic concept so will therefore have more appeal to their core market. For our part we will be publishing new scenarios to go with the original **HeroQuest**.'

Our reviewer mentioned that he found it a tad unbalanced if players co-operate.

'That's fair comment, in fact I designed it that way. The game is really aimed at 10-12 year olds who play with their mums and dads. My feeling is that they play in a very competitive, rather than co-operative way, so they wouldn't experience the problems your games group did.'

What do you think of the changes we proposed (see page 17)?

'They're excellent. This is what we want to encourage. The game system was kept

flexible enough so that it could incorporate all sorts of amendments. We could have added a whole pile of optional rules but we didn't want to confuse people by producing a 32 page rule book. Games Workshop can do that, indeed their fans probably expect nothing less. I grew up playing SPI and Avalon Hill games so beefy rule books don't faze me, however, working for a company like MB means that you have to aim for the mass market. If we sell to the games hobby that's a bonus.'

The fantasy theme, though, isn't that a quantum leap for a company like MB with its family image?

'Undoubtedly, but we felt there was a gap in the market for a simple, well produced, fantasy game. Most games in this field are quite the opposite. Huge rulebooks and poor components. Nobody's fault, small companies simply don't have the resources to produce high quality components.'

On a personal note what games do you play yourself?

'I've always been a big fan of Napoleonics. Avalon Hill's **Napoleon** is a game I find myself constantly returning to,

though right now I've been playing with miniatures quite a lot'.

*Back to **HeroQuest**. Are we likely to see more games of this scale from MB?*

'This, of course depends on its success, which I must say, at the moment looks very promising. Right now I'm working on a science-fiction game which will probably be the second game in what we hope will be a continuing series'.

And so do we.

Interview by Brian Walker

GI



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COURT CIRCULAR

Publish and be slammed

Brian Walker

Advertising versus editorial is an old, old war, but new battles are still being fought.

M'learned friends do not get involved in the legal shenanigans of the games business as much as they, and their pockets, would like. However, a case appearing before M'lud at Lowestoft County Court shortly is likely to change all that. In the red dock we have Steve Nichols, ex-editor of *Games Monthly* (deceased), while in the blue dock step forward Jeremy Shaw, MD of Intellectual Pursuits, publishers of *Trinity*, which turns out to be the cause of this bonus for the briefs.

BLIND FATE

It all started not so long, long, ago when Shaw booked a mail order ad for the game in the December issue of *Games Monthly*. The conditions surrounding the editorial accompaniment are what is now disputed. According to Shaw, the booking of the ad was conditional on seeing a copy of the review 'prior to publication' so that he (Shaw) could 'comment on any points made within the article which might effect an unsatisfactory response' (to the ad), and that the same issue of the magazine would carry a feature on the background to the game and the game itself.

What actually appeared was a 'very favourable review' (Shaw's own comment). However, part of the review suggested that the first player (in the two player version) had an 'enormous advantage'. A letter was sent to *Games Monthly*, dated 14th December, contradicting this view but was never published because,

according to Nichols, it arrived 'too late for publication', in what was to be the last issue.

AZTRAL ENCOUNTER

In addition to the aforementioned condition, Shaw also noted that *Games Monthly* carried a 'large amount of mail-order advertising and editorial support for Aztral Games' and that this could adversely affect the chance of success for his own ad. According to Shaw, an agreement was then struck whereby such 'in-house' advertising would be toned down in the December issue.

Shaw now claims that none of these pre-conditions were met and has not only refused to pay for the ad, but launched a counter-claim for 'damages, loss of time, legal costs, loss of sales and interest', an action that, according to Shaw, elicited the response of 'Fuck you' from Nichols. For his part Nichols claims that Shaw's allegation of a contract is 'utter garbage' and that for an editor to show a review to a manufacturer prior to publication is 'quite unethical'. Nichols claims he backed up his review of the game by playing it 'sixteen times at the Earls Court Toy Fair' last January. The result he says, was a win for the first player each time.

COMMENT

What we have here is a case of editorial freedom without financial retribution (an issue close to our own hearts), and, although clearly not in the same league as Section 28 or media restrictions on repor-



'I was only exercising my Right of Reply, officer!'

ting 'terrorism', the question of free speech itself. Our own policy is that when an advertiser books space that is exactly what he gets, plus a guarantee of a right of reply (see page 55). Generally, though, they'll find their products getting a mention in the news section as a bonus, but that's about it. Clearly it puts the editor in an untenable situation if he agrees to show reviews to a manufacturer prior to publication.

Whether or not this was the case in the story described above is a matter of dispute, however our feeling was that Shaw was wrong to ask. Certainly it is hard to conceive of a similar request being made of a theatre or film critic. Why should the games business be any different? When a magazine starts tailoring its views to accord with advertisers (for inevitably that is the slippery slope), it loses its credibility followed, in double quick time, by its readers.

VARIANTS

The Games Clinic

Minor surgery for games feeling under the weather.

HeroQuest

Philip A Murphy

Last issue's review pointed out some problems with this game. The following amendments improved the game greatly for us:

For a lone adventurer, or any number of non co-operative players – No change

For two co-operative adventurers – At the end of each of his turns, Morcar rolls a combat die. If the result is a 'white shield', he may place a wandering monster anywhere on the board, in any room or corridor that the players have visited but no longer occupy. If such an area does not exist, Morcar does not place a wandering monster.

For three or four co-operative players – As above, plus – increase the 'hit points' of orcs, fimir, zombies, and all 'one off' monsters by one hit point. Increase the hit points of chaos warriors and the dreaded gargyle by two.

The effect of the first of these adjustments is to speed up the adventurers, since the more turns they spend on the quest, the more forces Morcar has. This discourages them somewhat from searching every little nook and cranny for traps and treasure.

The second amendment gives the Morcar player a chance once the adventurers have obtained some equipment – the barbarian with chainmail, helmet, shield and battle axe, is truly a ferocious sight to behold.

HeroQuest is published by MB, price £21.95.



Philip Murphy and chums settle down to a game of HeroQuest

Horse trading

Brian Walker

Kuhhandel, published by Ravensburger, is a potentially classic card game, whose elevation to such status is only prevented by a minor flaw; the player who collects the horse cards will generally win the game. Well, perhaps not that minor. However this is easily correctable if you adopt the following rule:

At the end of the game multiply the number of sets you have collected by their value (do not include the dove card if your edition has one). **Kuhhandel** can now take its place in the Hall of Fame.

Kuhhandel comes highly recommended and is currently available with an English translation from Just Games. Price £9.95.

Money changer

Derek Carver

If you successfully outbid your opponent for a card, you only pay him the difference of the sums bid, not *all* that you bid. At the end of the game cash is counted at face value and added to your points score. The effect of this variant is to make the bidding much tighter, and more importantly, to make the final result in doubt up until the end.

Note: These variants may be used separately, or in conjunction with one another.

Crude for six players

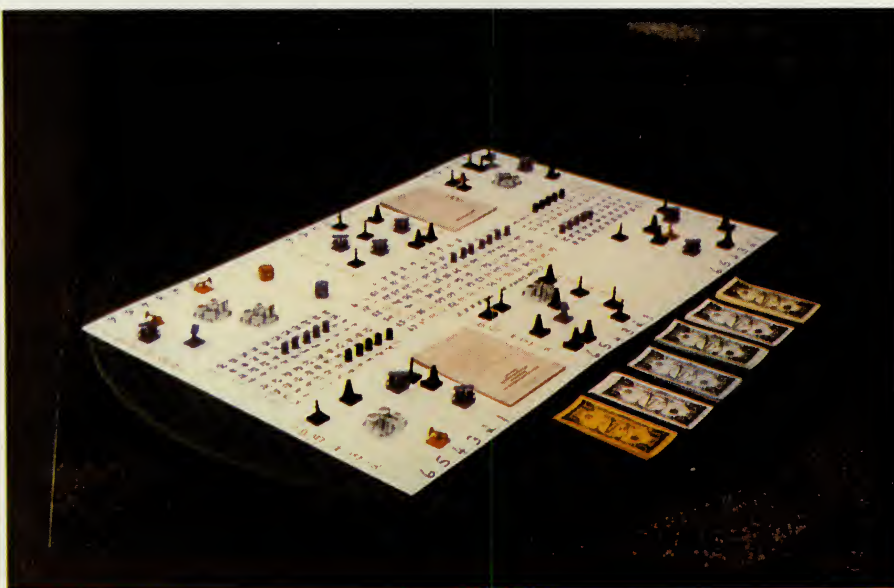
George Crawshaw

Four's Company by Stuart Dagger in issue 8 was doubly interesting to me; firstly because it was my review in *Games & Puzzles* which played a part in his purchase of the game (at the incredible price of over £17 in 1976!), but particularly because some months ago I designed a board to do exactly what he proposes, and our gaming group has found that it works perfectly well.

PROGRESSION

However, contrary to what Stuart says about prices, they do need some modification – if you wish to stick to the same speed of progression through, and limits of, the various markets, which I think is important. This is because the ratio of dice throws to numbers of elements on the board affected by them is different – each die affects four boards rather than three.

This is reflected in my consumer sales market simply by every *third* price being repeated: 1, 2, 3, 3, 4, 5, 6, 6 and so on. Similarly, as there are 50% more players competing on the domestic and foreign markets, every *second* price on these is repeated. Finally, Stuart's oil well sug-



George's customised Crude board for six players.

gestion has the virtue of simplicity but makes them progressively rather cheap. We use a scale which increases alternately by seven and six, that is, 7, 13, 20, 26 and so on. It is more complex, but well-buying is not that frequent and this system preserves comparative price progression in that the sixth well – for example every player having one each – costs 39 (compare with 40 for the fourth well in the four player game).

Although it fails to meet one of the criteria for a classic game – player interaction – **Crude/McMulti** remains an essential purchase for lovers of serious economic games. GI

McMulti, formerly known as *Crude*, is published by Hexagames, and can be obtained from Just Games or Esdevium, price £24.95.

本 Shōgun

Choice Provinces

Mark Green

One of the problems with **Shogun** is the random set-up which can leave some players with a distinct advantage while casting the armies and spearmen of others to the winds.

To rectify this, deal out only *half* the province cards then, in turn order, place a spearman one at a time in the provinces

of your choice. Or, you can even go the whole hog and place spearmen at the start to determine ownership of provinces, abandoning the deal altogether. GI

Shogun is published by MB as part of their Gamemaster series, price £29.95. As MB will not be reprinting this series, you'd be well advised to grab your copy while it's still available.



NEXT ISSUE IN GI:

1853 – definitely!

Variants for Ravensburger's Scotland Yard.

More computer games reviewed, including *Fire Brigade*, *Oil Imperium*, *Red Lightning*, *TV Sports Football* and *Curse of Azure Bonds*.

Plus all the usual news, reviews, gossip and features.

DESIGN NOTES

Range wars

Game designers are often like vultures, swooping on the corpse of a game in order to extract some choice morsel. Derek Carver explains how he found a neat mechanic in an otherwise lacklustre product.

When I buy a game I don't necessarily hope for something totally unusual. In fact, I don't have any special expectations, merely hoping for a good game. It is true that most games have something quite different about them but this doesn't necessarily make them any better than a game that contains only familiar procedures put together in a different mix.

But this series of articles concerns novel facets of game playing that may not be familiar to many people. Rules here and there, often in little-known games, that make one think what a splendid idea somebody had; all too frequently, unfortunately, buried in a game of no very great merit.

In many of the games I invent a combat system is involved. Although I try to make each of them different I cannot claim ever to have invented a totally new combat system. I am merely manipulating concepts with which I am already familiar. I wish it were otherwise, but there it is. Not that it is easy ever to claim

that something is totally new as many ideas that we have are formed out of half-remembered past experiences, but you know what I mean.

Having said that, a combat system I would like to bring to your attention appeared in a small game called *The Conquest of Space* invented by Tom Cleaver and published by Ursine Engineering in Louisville, Kentucky in 1977. You could be excused for passing this game by. It comprised only a small paper board depicting a grid and a collection of rather poor quality tiddlywinks. The whole thing was packaged in the plastic envelopes popular at the time. Its published price was \$9, which meant it was probably near £9 in UK shops so it was hardly likely to have instant appeal. I bought mine in a closing down sale.

Designer Tom Cleaver, however, had offered us a really good combat system. I don't know whether he invented it himself or whether he had modified a system he'd seen elsewhere but it was the first time I had seen it, anyway, so my thanks go to Tom.

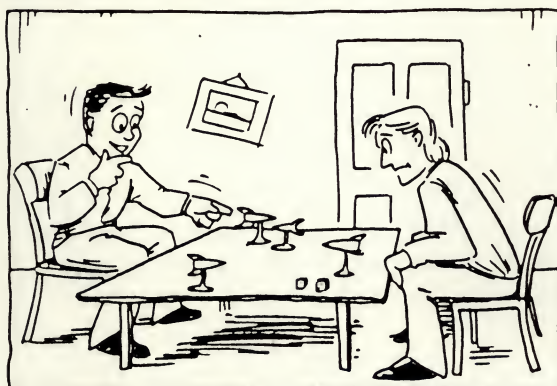
The system simulates two hostile fleets of spaceships approaching and attacking one another. Each has one missile to fire and, of course, hopes to destroy an enemy ship. It has to be assumed that these missiles have a limited range of accuracy. This means that if you decide to fire one of your missiles when the ships are quite far apart a hit would prevent an opposing ship ever getting the chance to fire its missile but you also have every possibility of missing. If, on the other hand,

you decide to fire when you're really close you will hardly miss but you might not still be alive to savour the experience.

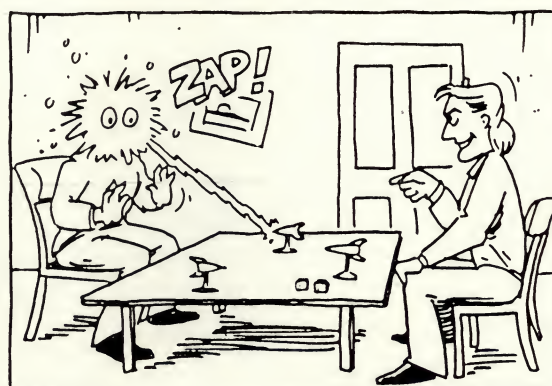
This is how it works. Each player has a small combat grid with boxes numbered one to six. Secretly (behind his hand or a piece of card) players place the individual ships of their fleet on the different boxes. You may spread your ships over several different numbers on the range table or you can put them all on the same number, it's up to you. This is done by each player simultaneously. The numbers in the boxes represent the distances at which you wish to fire those particular ships' missiles. The placings are then revealed.

Ships at the longest range fire first, then proceeding to the next longest range and combat continues in this way until all surviving ships have fired. Firing is not done simultaneously (ties being broken in favour of the defender) and losses are taken immediately.

The player who selected the highest number (the greatest range) fires first by rolling the die once for each ship. In the case of both players having put ships on the same number the defender fires first. If he rolls a number equal to or greater than the range selected (the number in the box) he scores a hit and the opponent must immediately remove one of his ships (his choice). In addition, if a 5 or 6 is rolled he rolls again whatever the outcome. For example, if a ship was on a six and the first roll as a 5 he would roll again even though the ship had, in effect, missed the target. He may continue to re-



'What's your range?'



'Zero!'

peat his roll as long as he rolls 5s and 6s with the opponent taking losses as appropriate.

It is then the opponent's turn if he has ships on the same number. If he hasn't, players move down the range grid until the next ship is encountered and the operation is repeated.

Example

Player A (Attacker) has five ships. Player D (Defender) has three ships. Player A places two ships on 5, two on 3 and one on 2. Player D places two on 5 and one on 4.

Combat starts with the 5s. As both are on this number Player D rolls first. He rolls a 4. The first ship has missed. He then rolls a 6 for his second ship. This is a hit and he gets another roll but rolls a 2, which is a miss.

Player A, having to remove a ship, had removed one of his 5s, which loses the chance of firing.

Player A now rolls for his sole remaining ship on 5 and rolls a 1, which is a miss.

Player D now rolls for his ship on 4. He is lucky again and rolls a 6. Player A must lose a ship and decides to lose the remaining ship on 5 that has already fired. D's second roll is a 4, so Player A must lose another ship and discards the ship on 2.

Player A then starts rolling for the ships on 3, and so the game continues.

That's all there is to it, but I can assure you it is a nail-biting system.

Although the object of this article is to draw your attention to this one aspect of the game, collectors will probably wish to know more about the game itself. I thought it was a pretty good game. There were several scenarios, some inevitably better than others. Unfortunately the component quality let it down. But I felt the game good enough to remake it with a stronger board and with more solid components (I used the 4-blip Lego pieces, which stack nicely). The move-

ment system was pretty good, too. Each square contained two face down counters. When you landed there you looked at the counters and each showed a letter. These letters indicated the spaces you could travel to from that square. You then revealed the counter and flew away. In this way players worked to discover a route through the system, picking up randomly distributed raw materials and, equally importantly, how to get home again once they'd set out!

In remaking the game I tended to take some of the best features from more than one scenario resulting in a game with just one set of rules. I can't say this is any better than the original game because it is so long since I played it, but there must have been something about it that appealed to us at the time. Anyway, the result is a good game and one that has been played regularly by us over the years. G





We'd be interested in hearing from readers who have similarly obscure games that contain novel design features
— Ed.

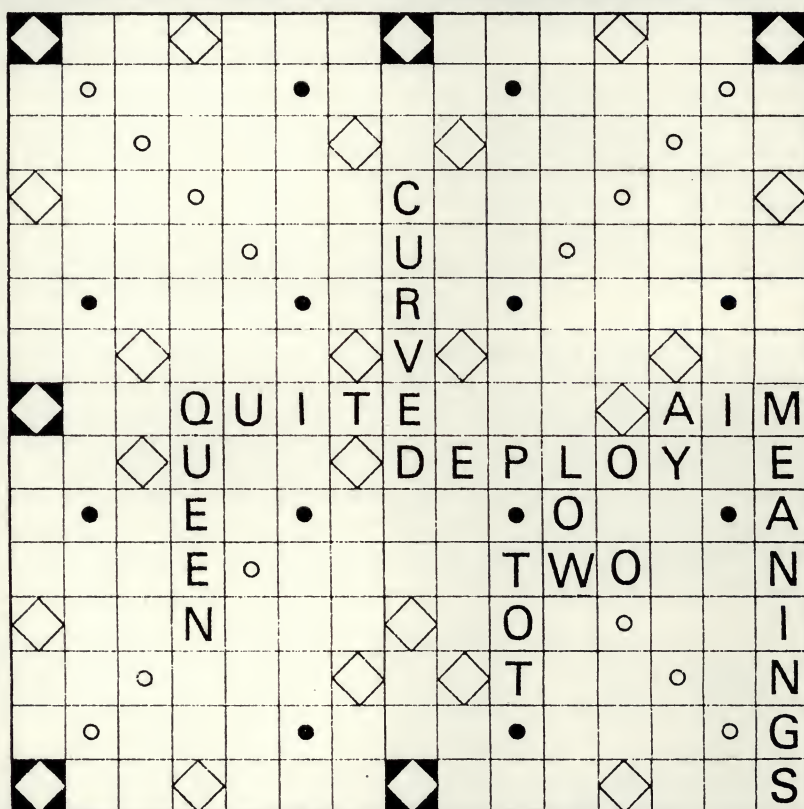
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TILE VALUES

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B = 3	O = 1
C = 3	P = 3
D = 2	Q = 10
E = 1	R = 1
F = 4	S = 1
G = 2	T = 1
H = 4	U = 1
I = 1	V = 4
J = 8	W = 4
K = 5	X = 8
L = 1	Y = 4
M = 3	Z = 10

50 points bonus if all seven tiles are played.

	= Triple Word Score
	= Double Letter Score
	= Triple Letter Score
	= Double Word Score



What is the highest score obtainable on the Scrabble board diagram above with this rack:

G I I L N S T

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Brian Walker

Knock, knock. Who's there? Why it's David Leonard from Perfect Games, producers of *Share Mania*, interrupting my usual afternoon snooze. Normally an act never to be forgiven, however, in this instance David had the foresight to bring a gift, which turned out to be no less an offering than *Starships*, published by Waddingtons in 1980. I must confess to being ignorant of the game at first. However, the legend on the credits 'based on an idea by Rudi Hoffman' almost woke me up. A quick flick through the rules and my drowsiness was replaced by a distinct feeling of *déjà vu*.

STARFOOT

The object in the game is to build three spaceships on the playing area which you are given. This consists of three lines of squares each. Drawing from the deck, you place cards, depicting parts of a ship and assorted weaponry, onto the squares, only stopping when you pick up a card that you already have on your playing area. If you already have three cards of this type then you must discard and forfeit your turn.

A ship must consist of a front and a rear. The longer the ship the greater number of points scored at the end of the game. Points are also scored by collecting various sets (marked in blue) and placing them in the correct order on your ship. Firepower cards are marked in red and add to the combat strength of your ship. Once a ship is complete it may attack any

uncompleted ship providing it has a greater combat value. The 'attack' consists of taking all the cards from the embryonic craft and selecting what you want for your own ships, though red cards have to be discarded.

The Defence Shield card prevents such attacks but can be stolen, unless it is part of a completed ship, by the Starfighter card. The worst thing that can happen is that your ship falls into a Black Hole, which happens when this card is drawn. Fortunately you have a choice, so a wise strategy would be always to ensure that you have a teeny weeny ship under construction ready to undertake the ultimate sacrifice. This is one of a number of tactical decisions a player must make and which lifts the game way above Rudi's much vaunted *Café International* – if that is the 'Game of the Year' then this is the Game of the Century. The game ends when one player has completed three ships, or there are no cards left in the draw pile. The winner is the player who has accumulated the most points.

BEAM ME UP SITTING BULL

Sound familiar? Unless you've played *Ogallala/Blackfoot/Chaos Marauders*, probably not. *Blackfoot* was, of course,

the licensed English version of *Ogallala*, and *Chaos Marauders*, was, well . . .

It seems that somebody at Waddingtons had the bright idea that Red Indians and canoes (the theme of *Blackfoot*) might be a little bit *passé*, and given that space fantasy (*Star Wars* et al) was undergoing something of a resurgence around that time, why not cover all bets and put two games out, or rather one game with two different themes? To be fair there are small differences between the two. In *Starships* there are less sets to collect – an element which results in it being less fiddly and benefits the game as a result.

In terms of aesthetic value the space opera wins hands down. The artwork on the cards is terrific. Indeed, it must be one of the few games from that period that looks as though it could have been published tomorrow. Even more surprising that it came from a company not noted for their contributions to the graphic arts: this being evident in their presentation of the rules – black type on dark blue paper, and poorly laid out to boot. The lack of attention paid to presenting one of the most vital ingredients of any game is worth an article in itself. Should you wish to obtain this game, now buried in deep space, I can only suggest doing what the provider of this treasure did to obtain his, and that is visit car boot sales. Failing that, if you don't mind building canoes instead of space ships, *Ogallala* has just been published by ASS in Germany and it is hoped that a few copies will be winging their way over here shortly. G



DESERT ISLAND GAMES

A sporting chance

John Harrington

Unfortunately John's arrival on the island got delayed somewhat, however, he has now arrived and was last heard asking the natives how Arsenal got on.

In the summertime when the weather is hot, a true Englishman's thoughts turn to just one thing. No, not that. And no, not a long cool pint of lager either, although if you are buying . . . I am referring, of course, to the genteel game of cricket. This summer has seen England's national cricket team comprehensively thrashed by Australia. The humiliation has been so great that I have felt moved to get up and damn well do something about it. It is without hesitation then that I don my white flannels and head directly for the library where I keep my copy of **Armchair Cricket** (Armchair Adventurers). Then it is straight out to the verandah, pausing only at the fridge to grab a bottle of something cold, to show these Aussies how the game should be played.

I am not normally one for card games, and I am not especially taken with the game of cricket, but this fiendishly simple game is such good fun to play in the sun that I had to have it 'opening the batting' for my desert island games. Not a simulation, more a card game on a cricketing theme, it nevertheless recreates most of the facets of cricket without recourse to pages of tables and matrices.

A game which recreates a less genteel sport is **Title Bout** (Avalon Hill), one of the most absorbing solitaire games ever designed. With a combat system that should be the envy of every fantasy role-playing game, you can recreate 'dream match-ups' between all-time greats or bottom of the bill slugfests between such all-time blockheads as Brian London and Primo Carnera. The game recreates the styles of boxers so accurately, while the

biographical details of old time pugs add so much flavour, you can almost smell the stale sweat and fresh blood as you open the box.

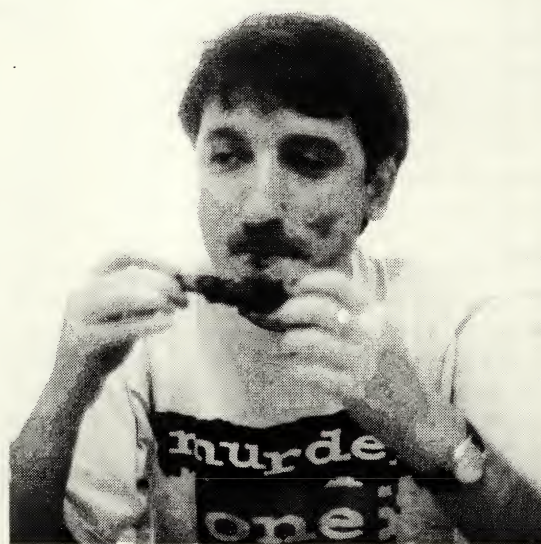
Talking of fantasy role-playing games, a bit of role-playing would be a must for a desert island, where you might actually get the time to finish a 'never ending' campaign. I believe that the wit and the imagination of the players and the referee is more important than the rules system and for that reason I have stuck with the cheapest and simplest game on the market, **Tunnels & Trolls** (Flying Buffalo and Corgi books). I still have my battered 13-year old T&T rule book and if I have added so many bits and pieces to the basic system that the game I play is no longer recognisable as T&T I do not think that is a criticism of the system. Those of you who prefer to spend ten times as much on a game which does all of your thinking for you and provides a plethora of rules and tables ranging from 'Random Sneeze Table' to 'Combat between Gnats and Brontasaurons' (sic) might think differently, but then after such a heavy investment in a game, you are forced to, aren't you tosh?

Gosh. I haven't chosen a sports game in my Desert Island selection for at least five lines. Better put that right. How about a motor racing game? **Speed Circuit** (Avalon Hill) is best from the point of view of putting you in the driver's seat but it is a tense, demanding game. **Grand Prix** (Ravensburger) is a much simpler game which nevertheless more accurately simulates the way a Grand Prix field gets strung out. I'll take them both, and design a few new courses of my own for good measure. Oh, and if I'm allowed a fax on this desert island I should also like to participate in **The Big Helmet** (Datastream International), a play-by-mail game where players trade in mythical shares in Grand Prix racing drivers such as Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost. Prices move up and down according to



supply and demand but victory is determined by the number of World Championship points each quoted driver gets. Until I started playing this game I had no interest in motor racing whatsoever, while motor racing fanatics who have played it have likewise developed an interest in the stock market. This writer advises you to buy Senna and sell Prost.

If I am to be allowed a fax on this island then I presume the island must have electrical power points, which means I could take my trusty Atari 800XL computer, which in turn means I could take along **Rails West** (SSI). Concentrating on similar themes to the admirable **1830** (Avalon Hill), this game allows even more financial chicanery, with variable dividends, takeovers, rights issues, loans, bond issues (and payment defaults) and flotation of new companies. Ostensibly about railways in the mid-nineteenth century, what the game is really about is the construc-



John Harrington chews on the remains of one of the island's previous inhabitants.

tion of the sort of labyrinthine corporate edifice currently being run by the likes of Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell. The great part about it is you don't have to be a brash ignorant Aussie-turned-Yank or a fat bloated egotistical Czech-turned-Limey to play it.

American Football, as we call it over here in Britain, has been described as 'chess with human pieces'. As such, it is a good subject for a game, and the most detailed game on the subject is, in my opinion, **Statis Pro Football** (Avalon Hill). Unlike chess this game does have an element of luck, which makes it a real heart-breaker when you do everything right but still the ball won't go in the back of the net (Shurely shome mishtake? - Author), but then 'football is a funny old game'. Because the game can drag on a bit I extend the chess metaphor even further by recommending you play with a chess clock if you have one. I also heartily recommend this for wargames.

Thus far I seem to have a preponderance of sport games in my selection, which I shall have to rectify by including **Krem-lin** (Avalon Hill). Aside from the fact that it is a game of cunning, deceit and all those other attributes which made our own Harold Wilson such a successful Prime Minister, it also yields tremendous fun, especially when somebody unpopular fails their health roll and becomes just another brick in the (Kremlin) wall. The shouts of glee from the players when this happens can be heard in Vladivostock, although if you quote me on that I shall deny I ever said it.

I thought of ending my Desert Island selection with the singularly appropriate **Abandon Ship**, a marvellously tasteless family boardgame about saving shipwreck victims from sharks and cannibals, but I shall try and slot this into a future RIP feature. Instead I shall finish with another unjustly overlooked game, **'Thunder-in' Guns** (Standard Games), a rootin', tootin' shootin' game of the Wild West where the primary tactics seem to be to first try to kill the non player characters and then, if you fail to kill them, persuade them to join your gang. The game often ends with everyone shooting everyone else (*à la Nuclear War*) with the only beneficiary being the town undertaker - although he's usually the first victim of the 'shoot first, invite them to join you' policy. Recommended for all dirty double crossing low down varmints. It should go down a bundle at the next GI editorial meeting. G

Next month, the one you've all been waiting for: Paul Mason (who?)

STRATEGY SEMINAR



Sharp PRACTICES

Steve Jones

1830 is a game for two to six players, designed by Francis Tresham and published by Avalon Hill. Like its classic predecessor **1829** (Hartland Trefoil), **1830** is a railroad business game.

For those familiar with **1829**, there are two major differences in **1830**. The first is the locale: whereas **1829** covers the Railroad Era in 19th century Britain, **1830** covers the growth of the railroads in the north-eastern United States and south-eastern Canada from the early part of the 19th century to the present day. The second difference is one of emphasis. **1829** concentrates more on the mechanics of running the railroad companies for high profits and less on manipulating the stock market. In contrast, **1830** concentrates more on manipulating share prices and less on running the railroad companies; indeed, the opportunities for swindle and sharp practices are many and various for the

unscrupulous investor. It is not an easy game to play. While its mechanics are fairly straightforward, there are many elements involved during play, and the interplay between them is both complex and subtle. If one were searching for an appropriate single sentence to describe **1830**, it would be 'This is a sharp game for sharp players'.

PORTFOLIOS

The game consists of a sturdy fold-up board of which about one-half depicts the north-eastern United States and part of south-eastern Canada. This map has superimposed upon it a grid of 4cm hexagonal spaces; hexagonal railroad track tiles are placed in these spaces during the course of play, and a railroad network is gradually built up. Around the edge of the map are marked-out spaces for the Stock Market (where the current corporation stock prices are indicated), the



Atlantic, 1832



William Mason, 1856



Empire State Express, 1893

Bank Pool (for sold stock and trains), the initial stock offerings, the Par Stock Price list, the trains on offer, and various explanatory tables.

The object of the game is to make money; when the game ends, the player with the most money wins. The players achieve this by buying and selling stock in an attempt to build up a stock portfolio with a high revenue and profit potential. The value of the stock certificates in an individual portfolio is determined by two things: the revenue per certificate, and the current Stock Market price per certificate. The six private railroads pay a fixed revenue, and are not quoted on the Stock Market; they have poor long term prospects, but have considerable short term value, of which more anon. The eight railroad corporations, on the other hand, have both variable revenue and Stock Market prices. There are many subtle undercurrents associated with the valuation of the available stock certificates, which become more apparent with experience.

OPERATING ROUNDS

There are no player turns as such in the game. Instead, play proceeds in a sequence of stock rounds and operating rounds until either the Bank runs out of money or a bankruptcy occurs.

In the stock rounds, the players buy and sell stock certificates; there is one certificate per private railroad, and nine certificates per corporation (one president's certificate worth two shares, and eight single share certificates).

In the operating rounds, the private railroads earn revenue for their owners, and the president (or the largest stock holder) of each corporation performs its operations. These consist of laying a track tile, buying corporation tokens (or garrisons, as they are popularly called), running train services (and thereby earning revenue), buying (and sometimes selling) trains, and choosing whether or not to pay a dividend to the stockholders. This last decision affects the stock price of the corporation's stock: the price rises upon payment of dividends, and falls otherwise.

A corporation earns revenue if it has at least one train and one route between two or more cities (the revenue earned is equal to the sum of the city values of the

city stops on the route); this route must include at least one city occupied by the corporation's token.

The number of operating rounds between stock rounds depends upon whether the game is in Stage One, Two or Three, and is equal to the current stage number at the end of each stock round. The game starts in Stage One, and proceeds to Stages Two and Three respectively when the first type 3 and type 5 trains are purchased by any corporation.

CORPORATIONS

To those readers who have played 1829, this is all familiar stuff. However, five major rules changes were introduced into 1830 which have touches of genius and turned what would have been a good game into a great game. The first rule change is that the eight corporations can be floated at any time, and in any order.

Furthermore, the player who buys the presidency certificate gets to set the par value of the shares; the allowable par values lie between \$67 and \$100.

The second rule change concerns the corporation garrisons. In both 1829 and 1830, garrisons enable corporations to diversify their routes. A garrison in 1829 prevents rival corporations from using the station. However, a garrison in 1830 only prevents rival corporations from passing through the station; they can still run services to the station. This difference introduces a whole new dimension to the planning of routes in 1830. Basically, short routes are relatively secure, and it is the longer routes which are in danger of being chopped.

The third rule change is connected to the dividend payments. Dividends are also paid to shares in the Bank Pool, with the payments being made into the corporation's treasury. This implies that there are times when the corporation president will feel less pressure to plough back in order to increase its treasury. This rule can be particularly helpful to the weaker companies. There are subtle implications to this rule which will become more obvious after several playings.

The fourth rule change concerns the purchasing of trains by corporations: if a corporation has a route and no trains, it must buy one. If it has not got sufficient funds in its treasury, the president must

make up the shortfall out of his own resources.

This requirement can easily break a player's financial resources, and will give any aspiring corporation president nightmares in the later stages of the game. These nightmares are partly due to the technological obsolescence built into the trains, and partly due to the fact that there is no official receiver, as in 1829.

TRAINS

There are six classes of trains available in the game: types 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, and the diesels. The type N trains run between N consecutive city stops along a specified route; the diesel is unique in that there is no upper limit to the number of stops along its specified route. Initially, there are only type 2 trains available. Each successive class becomes available when the previous class runs out. The catch is that when the first type 4 is sold, the type 2 trains are removed from the game. The type 3 trains are removed when the first type 6 is sold, and the type 4 trains are removed when the first diesel is sold.

Consequently, a corporation might look healthy, with several trains and good revenue earnings, only to find itself foundering with no trains when another corporation buys a new type of train that has just become available. And if you should be so unfortunate as to find yourself running a corporation possessing no trains, you cannot just sell out. To sell out of a corporation, there must be another player with at least two shares to whom the presidency can be passed; unfortunately, this 'easy' route out is not always available. Clearly, these corporations are not limited liability companies! The good player will be aware of this, and should plan his long term strategy accordingly.

This awareness should include becoming thoroughly familiar with what happens when each new type of train comes into play, and the implications of this on long term strategy. The solution of the problems associated with this unlimited liability rule tends to dominate play in the middle and end game. Particularly critical periods requiring great care and attention occur when there is one type 3 left, and when only one type 4 remains; the former event signals the imminent demise of the type 2 trains, and the latter event signals the imminence of Stage 3 and the consequent manoeuvring which

*Niagara Class, 1945**K4 Class, 1914*

occurs when the players attempt to secure the limited number of permanent trains in the end game.

STOCK MARKET

The fifth rule change affects the Stock Market and its operation, which is where the game is won and lost, so it is well to discuss the Stock Market in some detail. The Stock Market, unlike the linear track found in 1829, is a two dimensional matrix of stock price slots printed on the game board. Low prices are found in the bottom left hand corner, and high prices are found in the top right hand corner. Within it both vertical and horizontal movements representing stock price changes are possible; the price increases if the movement is vertically upwards or a horizontal shift to the right, and decreases if the movement is vertically downwards or a horizontal shift to the left. The change in price associated with each movement is variable, with relatively high changes occurring at the extreme ends, and relatively small ones in the middle.

Vertical share price movement takes place during the stock rounds. Every time a player sells a share, the price marker of that corporation moves down one slot. At the end of each stock round, the share price of every fully subscribed corporation moves up one slot. Horizontal movement takes place during each operating round. When the president of a corporation declares a dividend, the share price marker of that corporation shifts one slot to the right; if he/she ploughs the money back into the company, the share price marker shifts one slot to the left.

FINANCIAL KILLING

The positions of the corporations on the Stock Market also serve one very important function: they determine the order of play in each operating round, from highest to lowest. This use of the Stock Market to determine the order of play in the operating rounds is of particularly vital importance in the middle game just before the first type 5 train comes out. The good player will deliberately buy and sell specific stock in an attempt to manipulate the order of play to his advantage; if he gets it right, he can ensure that corporations in which he has a good holding will be in the best positions to acquire the limited number of types 5 and 6 trains available.

Another important feature associated with the Stock Market is the priority deal: the possessor of this gets the first option to buy and sell in the next stock round. This can be very important, particularly when a player president has asset-stripped his corporation and has somebody to dump it on. It is also important early on when the first corporations to be floated have increased their market values by a healthy amount. The player who can ditch his shares first has a double advantage: he will make a financial killing at the expense of his fellow-shareholders by selling out just before the share price crashes, and he can choose which corporation to float next.

There are many other subtle features associated with the Stock Market, but there is no room to include them all in this article; players new to the game should look upon it as a challenge to pick them up in as few playings of the game as possible.

STRATEGY

Now that you have an idea of how the game is played, how do you develop a winning strategy? One of the beauties of 1830 is that there is no single winning strategy as such. The closest thing to one is to gain control of two corporations, but the hitch is that they both need to be good, strong corporations; if you achieve that, you will be well on the way to winning. However, there are plenty of things that your opponents can do to upset your plans. Another useful strategy is gaining control of a corporation with a potentially good diesel route, and get a diesel train into it; if you can achieve this without excessive expenditure, you could be on to a winner.

One of the tricks to playing 1830 is anticipating problems before they arise and taking the appropriate evasive actions; equally useful is knowing what to do to limit the damage if you find yourself in trouble. The most useful overall advice is to be flexible, and ruthless. Don't form any fond attachment to your corporations. Many players invite disaster because they let themselves become emotionally attached to the corporation(s) they founded. They should be viewed as a means to an end, and nothing more. If you have a corporation that is headed for the rocks and you have a chance to get out, do so. Don't stay around because you think you can rescue it; leave that dubious distinction to someone else.

There are a number of useful rules of thumb to be aware of in general play. Always be aware of who is sitting where, and take the appropriate action. For instance, don't buy more than one share of any corporation whose president is sitting to your immediate right unless it has a 'safe' train, and even then, think hard about it. The reason for this is that, in a later stock round, your chances of getting rid of the excess 'dangerous' shares before he dumps the corporation on you are virtually non-existent. Contrariwise, it is much 'safer' to purchase more than one share in a corporation if its president is sitting to your immediate left. In this case, he can only dump the corporation on you if you let him have the priority deal.

Another useful dictum is to avoid being excessively 'greedy'. The number of times are legion when players have bought that extra second share on the expectation of a quick short-term profit, only to find the corporation dumped on them later; the risk is usually not worth it.

DIVIDENDS

On the question of declaring dividends, the best policy is almost invariably to declare. This applies even in the case where your corporation has a vulnerable train and a low treasury. The reason is that declarations will generally increase the values of your portfolio, and this will improve your chances of weathering a bankruptcy crisis. In addition, if your corporation is that weak, it will probably have shares in the Bank Pool, in which case the treasury will increase in value even when you declare; this reduces the pressing need to plough back. The only time in which it is cost effective to plough back is when this will gain your corporation an additional train in the end game, or will ensure that it obtains a 'safe' train. For example, you may have a type 5 train, and a plough-back will give you enough money in the treasury to purchase a type 6 train; if your corporation has the routes on which to run both trains, it can be a winning move. Equally, a plough-back which gives you enough money to trade in a type 4 train for a diesel is always worth doing.

One other general consideration worth mentioning is to try to build up as large a portfolio as possible; if you have more shares than anyone else, your chances of winning are that much better. One way of achieving this is to get one of your cor-

porations into the yellow, orange or brown sections of the Stock Market where its shares do not count towards the share limit for each player; if you do manage to achieve this, you will have to keep the extra shares in the yellow at least, and that is as good an excuse to go for a diesel train as any.

The good player will also become thoroughly familiar with the different types of track tiles available, and the attacking and defensive options associated with upgrades. In particular, get to know the different types of station tiles and how they can be placed to build up highly profitable routes.

One tactic with which you should become familiar is the laying of certain strategically important tiles in order to deny another player their use. Included in this category are the yellow type #57 and the green type #59 station tiles. There are only four of the former and two of the latter in the game. They are particularly important when corporations are attempting to build their first routes; removing these tiles from play can delay that first route and cripple the affected corporation.

THE PRIVATES

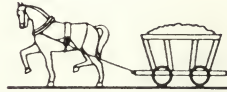
Following on from the general considerations discussed above, I shall continue the discussion of game strategy by considering the six private railroads and the eight corporations, and finish up with some observations about the beginning, middle and end games.

Although the private railroads have a limited lifetime, they are vital because of their potential to provide a large influx of cash to the players later on in the game. This potential exists because of the rule which allows the players to sell the private railroads to the corporations for between half and double their face value; the only exception to this is the B&O private. This rule effectively allows the president of a corporation to embezzle funds from the corporation's treasury.

If he times his move correctly, a player can strip the corporation of its cash and dump it on another player possessing at least two shares in it; often, when this ploy is pulled off, the corporation possesses plenty of trains which are in danger of being made obsolete in the near future. In addition to throwing a potentially disastrous problem into someone else's lap, the large infusion into the player's cash reserves puts him in a good position to float another corporation which will be in a better position to obtain the new trains.

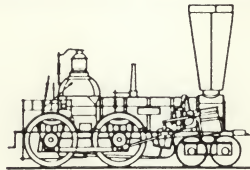
Let us now consider the six private companies in ascending order of price.

Schuylkill Valley Railroad & Navigation Co.



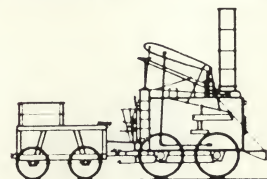
The Schuylkill Valley Railroad & Navigation Co is a bit of a joke. Its low face value and revenue make it of little value to anyone. Even its location in a mountain hex (G15) to the west of New York possesses little strategic value apart from being an obstacle. Its one asset is a relatively high revenue for little outlet in the early stages. Don't break your neck in the rush to pick it up.

Champlain & St. Lawrence Railway



The Champlain & St Lawrence Railway is a slightly better prospect. Its main asset arises after it has been sold to a corporation: the owning corporation can then lay two tiles in one turn, its normal lay and one in the C&StL hex located at B20. This can be of particular value to the CanPac in its efforts to break through to the lucrative routes near New York; but it should be pointed out that this is a long shot, and if it is to be played at all, it should be early.

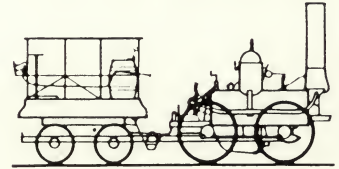
Delaware & Hudson Railroad



The Delaware & Hudson Railroad is starting to hit the big money. In addition to its trade in value being as high as \$140, it has a potentially high strategic value in its location near to New York in hex F16.

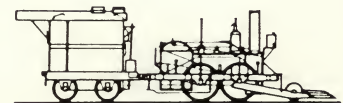
The owning corporation can lay a station tile and garrison in F16 even if this does not connect into its network. This gives corporations like the C & O, the Erie, and the CanPac the potential to set up lucrative routes to New York. This one should be watched.

Mohawk & Hudson Railroad



The Mohawk and Hudson has a potential double value. In addition to its relatively high revenue of \$20 and trade in value of up to \$220, it can be traded at any time for a NYC certificate. This last capability means that even if you never get the chance to use it to asset-strip a corporation, you will never lose its capital value since it can be traded in for an NYC share at any time before the first type 5 train is brought in. But don't hold on to it too long, particularly if the NYC comes out fairly early on.

Camden & Amboy Railroad

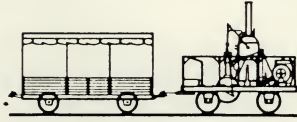


The Camden & Amboy Railroad is a potential goldmine. Worth up to \$320 cash in an asset-strip, it also has attached to it a free Penn certificate. This latter feature makes it easier to float the Penn early on, and makes an asset-strip even more likely. Even if you don't get to use it to asset-strip a corporation, its location in H18 is potentially valuable in the struggle to control the approaches to south New York. Its high potential value will mean that there will be a lot of competition in the rush to acquire it; whoever gets it should be made to pay well above the asking price for it.



General Motors F Series

Baltimore & Ohio Railroad



The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad is a bit of a mixture. On the plus side is its high revenue of \$30 and the automatic acquisition of the B&O corporation presidency. On the negative side is the fact that it automatically closes down when the B&O corporation buys its first train. Therefore, it is not as valuable as the Camden & Amboy, and as such, it is rarely worth paying more than \$5 over the odds to purchase it. The most critical decision which the purchaser has to make is the par value of the B&O corporation. In most cases, it is best to set it to the maximum possible value of \$100; this value ensures that the capital loss from the relatively fast disappearance of the B&O private is a minimum. The par value should only be set at a lower value if you have a partner who is willing to help buy out all the shares in the first stock round, thereby ensuring that the price rises steadily in the early stock rounds; even then the decision is marginal, and better terms might need to be set.

The eight railroad corporations are not all equal; some have better potential than others.



Pennsylvania Railroad

The Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) is potentially one of the best long term corporations, partly because of its relatively close starting position near New York, and partly because of its five tokens. The latter also implies that the PRR is a good corporation to put a diesel train into, if only because all those tokens give it the capability to defend the long routes which a diesel requires to be cost effective.

The PRR is usually one of the first corporations to be floated, because only five shares need to be bought instead of the usual six; the sixth share is already owned by the owner of the C&A. The one drawback of the PRR is its low revenue growth

rate; even with two trains in it, it rarely gets above \$6 a share early on.



New York Central Railroad

The New York Central (NYC) is potentially the best long term corporation, better even than the PRR. This is because its home base has a better revenue and track switching potential than the PRR's. However, it also suffers from poor initial revenue growth rates, and because of this it rarely comes out early on. It usually comes out in the middle period of the game. Like the PRR, it has excellent potential as a diesel corporation, particularly if it can get through to south New York via G17, and into the PRR network. However, its one weakness is that it needs a yellow type #57 tile to build its home base; therefore, any prospective president should make sure that there are plenty of these about when he floats the corporation.



Canadian Pacific Railroad

The Canadian Pacific (CPR) has a poor long-term potential despite its five tokens. Its starting position in Canada is isolated by river and mountain barriers from the lucrative routes in the centre of the board. If we add to this the relatively poor revenue growth rate, it is not difficult to conclude that it is probably a lame duck corporation. The only chance it can have to become a good long term prospect is either through early access to New York via a garrison in the D&H hex in F16, or through outside help in route building.



Baltimore & Ohio Railroad

The Baltimore & Ohio Corporation (B&O) is another potential diesel corporation. This is particularly so if it gets

started early, and gets to H16 before the PRR; in this case, the world is its oyster. Even if it cannot break out of its corner to become a diesel corporation, it still has a good potential to be one of the strongest of the medium corporations. But its president must be prepared to make things happen. And there is no harm done if it is not floated early in the game; just sit back and rake in the revenue from the B&O private. Another advantage associated with a late flotation is that the par value of \$100 ensures that there is plenty of cash in its treasury with which to buy a good Train.



Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad

The Chesapeake & Ohio (C&O) is another good medium corporation with an outside chance of gaining good diesel routes. It has excellent revenue growth potential because of its close proximity to Chicago. Consequently, it is a popular choice for flotation in the first stock round. Its one drawback is its relative isolation at the western edge of the board. This can be partly overcome by its early flotation, which can give it the time to build up its routes.



Erie Railroad

The Erie ('Eric') is one of the poorer corporations. It should never be floated early on because its home base can never be built until Stage 2; the only legal tile that can be placed in E11 is a green type #59 tile. Great care should also be exercised in laying its home base tile and token; it is dangerous to locate its home base on the north-west edge of E11 facing D10 because there are only two green type #59 tiles in the game, and if the second one goes into H18, the Erie will be crippled until Stage 3. These disadvantages usually lead to the Erie being one of the last corporations to be floated. It is stron-



Empire State Express, 1893

gest as the second corporation in a player's portfolio.



New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad

The New York, New Haven & Hartford (NYNH) is an excellent New York based corporation which possesses good revenue growth potential. While it is not common to see it floated early on, it can do well when it is. The one drawback to the corporation is its three tokens; this low number of tokens means that it is a poor choice to put a diesel train into. As one player observed, 'If the Hartford had an extra token it would be a cracking company!'



Boston & Maine Railroad

The Boston & Maine (B&M) is a corporation with mixed potential. If it is floated early on, it can do very well. It suffers from two drawbacks. The first is its geographical isolation from the bulk of the map by the Appalachian mountains and the river in F22. The second is its three tokens, which give it very little route flexibility. It is therefore hardly surprising to see it usually doing well only when it is floated early on. If it is one of the last to be floated, it will need friends if it is to do better than moderately well.

There is no ideal strategy to be pursued at the beginning of the game apart from being flexible. The one thing to keep in mind is that it is not vital to buy a presidency and float a corporation in the first stock round. However, if you are going to do so, the vital figure to keep in mind is \$402; this is the amount of cash you need to float a corporation on your own. The only exception is the PRR for which you need only \$335 in order to float it by yourself, because of the free share that goes with the C&A private. If you do have this amount available after all the private railroads have been sold, well and good; pick the corporation you want and get going. If you don't have the cash, you will need to strike a deal with another player in order to get his help to float a corporation. The one thing to keep

in mind when striking such a deal is not to be dogmatic. Certainly, try to strike the best deal that you can, but remember that the other guy should be offered something to entice him into the deal in the first place. And when you make such a deal, stick to it; as a general policy, it is counter-productive to welsh on agreed deals.

The only other thing to keep in mind in the first stock round is to make sure that the other players don't get their private railroads too cheaply. This applies particularly in the case of the C&A; it is criminal to let a player get this for \$165. A useful rule of thumb to keep in mind is whether the price reduces the player's cash reserves to less than \$402, or in the case of the bidder for the C&A, to less than \$335.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the beginning game ends, and the middle game starts. Probably the best definition is when the second set of corporations is floated. Generally speaking, the players who are floating these corporations are doing so out of their own resources, and so it is probably a good bet that they are doing well. If a player is floating his second corporation, it is invariably a sign that he is doing very well indeed, and the other players should be thinking of ways of tripping him up. There are many ways of doing this, but the most common means involves hitting his share prices, and attempting to remove from circulation specific tiles which he may require.

Once into the middle game, you should be devoting all your efforts to ensuring that your corporation gets at least one of those valuable type 5 trains. This will usually involve keeping a close watch on the share price trends on the Stock Market, and attempting to predict which corporation is likely to be able to buy the first type 5 train. This includes taking whatever steps are required to manipulate the share prices so that the trends go the way you want them to go. The trick then is to ensure that your corporation buys the first type 5 train, or failing that, has its operating round immediately afterwards. In the former instance, you should be trying to ensure that your closest rivals do not get the good trains.

The middle game usually ends and the end game begins when the first type 5 train is brought. This usually triggers a mad rush for the type 5 and type 6 trains, and more often than not the game settles down to an uneasy period during which someone is usually saving up for a diesel train. If your corporations are 'safe' with their type 5 or type 6 train, and your prospects

for a diesel are poor, you should be thinking about closing up the game, and making sure that any diesel routes are not very lucrative. On the other hand, if you are saving up for a diesel, you should be building, or have already built, your diesel route, and be taking whatever steps are required to protect it. The question of going for a diesel can be critical, especially since it will usually cost you something to get it. If you think you are already in front, it is probably not worth going for it. On the other hand, if you are coming second it is certainly worthwhile going for it; the only consideration that you might need to take into account is whether there will be enough time left once you have the diesel for its extra revenue to wear down the lead. The only other reason to go for a diesel is to force a bankruptcy, and in the ensuing share price chaos, to come out in front.

In conclusion, 1830 is an excellent business game which requires considerable thought and quickness of mind, and provides endless hours of enjoyment. I'll leave you with a final recommendation: do not play with the optional extra type 6 train; that version is for wimps! G

1830 is published by Avalon Hill, price £20.45. In case of difficulty in obtaining this game, contact TM Games, ☎ 0903 773170.

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FORUM

Platoon, Twilight 2000, Oppression. Analytical divertissements or tasteless

trivia? The games industry responds to 'The right of a game to tackle a subject.'

Yes, I unhesitatingly say I would find it intensely distasteful for certain situations to be made the subject of a game. But don't ask me to defend my position because I acknowledge that my response is emotive rather than logical. I am sickened when I read of the sufferings of the besieged of Alesia, for example, but would not be repelled at playing a game based on the siege. Yet games based on certain events in the Second World War, and certainly of the Falklands War, I would find distasteful even though I am no more personally connected with the participants than I was with the besieged of Alesia. Games are not like books. Books inform; TV documentaries also. Even a film, with a fictional story, can present a factual background. Games are diversions – we play them with invented rules – so, in effect, they trivialise. I suppose games *could* be informative (with all the facts carefully presented, assuming this is possible) and if so they would perhaps perform a useful function in making people more aware, but this is hardly the thing for a jolly evening so as such they would be destined to linger on the shop shelves.



'And what am I bid for this tasteful game of backstabbing?'

LICENCE TO THRILL?

But to analyse why in **Kremlin** I happily send somebody off to Siberia with whoops of glee, but would find a game based on concentration camps objectionable would take more space than *Games International* are prepared to give me. 9

—Derek Carver, designer of **Warrior Knights, Blood Royale** and **Showbiz**.

First, we believe a game manufacturer, in the United States at least, has a guaranteed constitutional right to produce games on any subject so long as they are not: 1) libellous, 2) advocate violent overthrow of the government, or 3) are of a pornographic nature. Secondly, it is our belief that since we as companies and individuals form a very socialised hobby, it does not suit our own long-term interests to antagonise the ignorant majority. 9

—Iron Crown Enterprises, publishers of **MERP, Rolemaster, Shadow World** and the Hero Games products.

Regarding the right of a game to tackle any subject . . . in our view, this is determined by how offensive the subject matter happens to be. If a subject offends the sensitivities of too many people who cannot avoid being exposed, then I don't think the subject should be gameable. 9

—The Avalon Hill Game Company.

The ethical questions surrounding this semi-mythical (I've never seen a copy) Falklands game is a pertinent one that most mature games players have to address for themselves at some stage.

As a designer, I might neatly sidestep it as, so far, I've not designed a modern military game and do not seem likely to do so in the foreseeable future. However, that itself is a comment as I'm not entirely happy gam-

ing in the modern period. I cannot get away from the nagging feeling that we are playing games with the suffering of people who may still be alive and whose sensibilities we may be wilfully ignoring.

News coverage of current conflicts must highlight the problem with many games players as it does with me (incidentally refuting the allegation that news coverage of war desensitises us). I could no more play a Beirut game with the images of maimed children and civilians being callously shelled wafting across my TV screen every night than I could contemplate a Falklands campaign with the memory of people burning in the Galahad or Sheffield.

But these are quite personal sensibilities, and I have two further observations to make. Firstly that time is the operator when it comes to deciding if I'm going to find a game enjoyable to play or not. Vietnam is usually OK, though it takes little effort to conjure up something from the library of gruesome Vietnam news pictures stored away in the minds of anyone over thirty, while the Second World War is definitely in play. I'm quite prepared to go along with the medieval concept of war as rugger with swords, while I'm quite convinced that Roman aggression was a Jolly Good Thing, though I'm glad I can't remember being a slave in a Roman mine!

Secondly, I don't think we should be too quick to condemn people who do game contemporary events. Some of the keenest real time wargamers are the military themselves. As long as gamers stick to purely military scenarios I don't think morality extends any further than whether you are happy to play the game or whether you would rather give it a miss and trash a few Gauls instead. 9

—Julian Musgrave, Wotan Games, publishers of **Excalibur, King Arthur** and **Richard the Lionheart**.

Our thanks to those who took the trouble to respond to this question. G



SNIPER

What would this column do without press releases? The latest such missive to save the day informs us that Paul Lamond Games, those wacky guys who brought you such classics as *How to be a Complete Bastard*, and *Wicked Willie*, are now poised for their *coup de grâce*; the *Jason Donovan Game*. This offering will arrive courtesy of Lindsay Advertising who have been commissioned to 'invent' the game. As their managing director Terry Miller puts it: 'This strengthens our position as one of the top UK design agencies in the game field'. So when your tiny tot asks you: 'Daddy, Daddy; where do games come from?' now you know the answer.

Major sensation

In case you hadn't heard, Glasgow is no longer the sort of place where you are likely to be confronted by a drunk, belching like the sound of broken bagpipes, and demanding that you buy him a 'pint o'heavy' (Jimmy). The Glasgow that Billy Connolly makes a living out of portraying as such has ceased to exist. The reason for my visiting this now most cultured of cities is to attend SensationCon, an event held for wargamers and sports gamers, organised by Ellis Simpson. No sooner have I arrived than who should blow in but my old friend Jack Jaffe – 'The UK's leading authority on board games' as his letter-heading modestly puts it. Jack, of course, is here to promote his game, the name of which I cannot quite recall. Trailing in his wake is a hackette from *The Scotsman*. Would she, I wonder, care to inquire about the nature of such conventions? 'I just do what the news desk tells me,' she replies. 'So you just report PR stunts?' 'I just follow the line they give me,' comes the response, now distinctly more edgy. Lois Lane this kid ain't.

Star billing, though, must go to Donald 'Major' Mack. A former member of military intelligence, the Major is well known for his steadfast refusal to play not just anything other than a wargame, but anything other than a NATO game. Even Avalon Hill's *Upfront* is dismissively referred to as 'the card game', and while this magazine's wargame section attracts initial interest he notes that we cover 'other games' as well, a view that is conveyed in the sort of tone that suggests we

are committing some unspeakable crime by doing so. The Major is a mound of eccentric charm, only occasionally giving credence to the cliché that military intelligence is a contradiction in terms, as, for example, when he holds forth on the subject of women's fashion: 'Girls who wear mini-skirts deserve to be raped' he thunders. When I decline to agree that clothes constitute a justification for physical assault, the Major has the answer: 'Ah yes, but you're from the soft South.'

My dear old Swami

The review of *Modern Naval Battles* (see page 36) was conducted with the assistance of the Belfast 'Murphias', led by Philip A Murphy, whose own reviews have graced these pages. A lesser known member of this group is 'The Swami', so called because of his habit of betting on

the horse of the same name in the fifth race of Avalon Hill's *Win, Place, and Show*, together with a fondness for making predictions and offering advice that is as unwanted as it is unsolicited. Unsurprisingly, in elimination games the Swami is always the first to go. Barely had our play session got under way before the cry went up; 'sink the Swami'. As his last ship went to a watery grave the Swami's pearls of wisdom were replaced by Anglo-Saxonisms of a less mystical nature. Come the next game, though, all is forgotten. Barely is the game out of the box before the Swami reverts back to being a human gaming advice centre. Every games group should have a Swami, and no doubt has.

Bombast

Connoisseurs of psychobabble (a Californian art-form), will be disappointed to learn of the departure of king of the hobby Ty Bomba from the editorship of *Strategy and Tactics*.

All is not lost, though, for his highness has taken to writing for the *Wargamer*, and the latest issue (Vol 2, No 14) shows he's still a master exponent of the genre: in the midst of an article on the next *S&T* game the king turns his attention to why 'monster (war) games' are no longer popular. His conclusion is that 'gamers are having psychological problems in bringing their hobby interests in line with their new life situations' (translation: 'they don't have the time'). As to why monster games are no longer being produced, the king has the answer: 'It's really the emotional element that stands in the way of this coming new decade's games making the same supply and demand adjustment as did the market of the seventies.' You work it out.

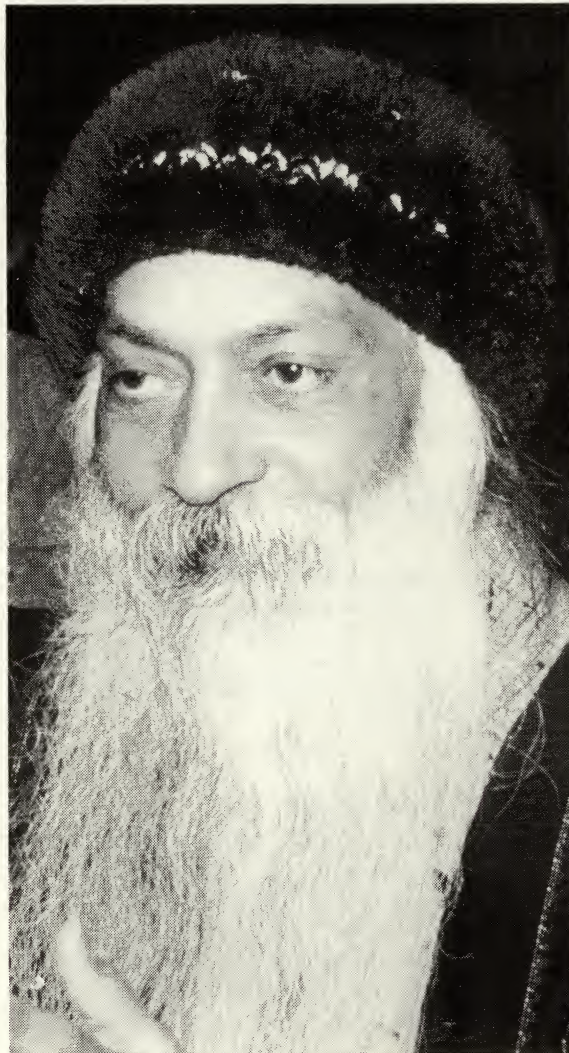


Photo: Rex Features

Tactical Moves

After a nine year sabbatical(?) from the games business, former SPI supremo Jim Dunnigan is to return to the fold as editor of *Strategy & Tactics* – a post not entirely unfamiliar as Dunnigan was editor of that magazine during its 'classic period'. In addition to wielding the blue pencil Dunnigan will also be also 'be turning his unique talents to game design and will now influence a new generation of *S&T* designers'. Former editor Ty Bomba has now left publishers 3W, though whether he jumped or was pushed depends on who you speak to. Either way, he is now talking of starting his own magazine. On the subject of new magazines: still no sign of 3W's *Space Gamer*, or *Sports Gamer*, both of which were due to be launched in spring. As subscriptions were taken in advance, a statement should be forthcoming shortly.

No rise

TSR's **High Rise** will not be released until early next year, not this September as previously announced.

The world at war

TM Games are pleased to announce that they are now the exclusive UK distributor 3W Inc. New releases from this company include **Tomorrow the World**, **ASG Baseball**, **Hitlers Last Gamble**, and **Modern Naval Battles**. Other battles sighted on the horizon include **Red Baricades** (an ASL module); **Bloody 110th**, a tactical level game from The Gamers; **Edelweiss: A Winter Storm** from Clash of Arms publications; **5th Fleet** from Victory Games, and **First Blood**, a civil war game from Simulations Design.

Jeux Vivres

Jeux et Strategie est mort, vivres Jeux et Strategie. The French games magazine which folded two months ago has been given the kiss of life. The resurrectionists consist of a combination of former employees and *Desis* magazine who bought the title from the Excelsior Publishing group. A new editor has been installed, though former chief Alain Ledoux will act as a consultant. Readers interested in taking out a subscription should write to: *Jeux et Strategie*, 33 Rue Faidherbe, Paris 75011, France.

Jackson jollies

School of Hard Knocks is the first supplement for **GURPS Supers**, a 32-page adventure which can form the back-

NEWS

ground to your campaign, while **Super Scum** supplies 30 supervillains for the game, with compete descriptions, back-grounds and powers. Also new are **Special Ops** (Delta Force style missions), **Deathwish** (an adventure for **Supers**), **Wild Cards** (a prestige setting for **Supers**), **Cliffhangers** (pulp adventure) and **Kitchen Sink** (contains anything not mentioned above).

Based on their classic **Car Wars**, but new and different, is **The Car Wars Card Game** – providing quick, easy-to-learn fun for everybody, due out later this year.

Surefire?

Starfire is a new science-fiction role-game, not to be confused with the Task Force boardgame. It's a small press production from Matthew Finlayson and promises unique rules for character generation and development, detailed combat, and a myriad character classes. The game is set in a forty-first century in which society is crumbling under the onslaught of a new and terrifying enemy.

Justice for all

Latest release from Mayfair Games in their **DC Heroes** line is a complete sourcebook for the popular superhero team, the Justice League. A complete array of villains, friends and maps are provided, for use with the second edition **DC Heroes Role-Playing Game**.

Sports Day

On the sports games front, **Snooker Champion** and the updated version of **Soccer Replay** are the latest Lambourne releases. For details contact: Lambourne Games, 8 Waters Ave, Carlton Colville, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 8BJ. ☎ 0502 562748.

Get conned

A final reminder that the annual Midcon convention takes place at the Royal Angus Hotel in Birmingham, Nov 3 to 5. The main event is the National **Diplomacy** Championship in which there may, or may not, be a cash prize. Many attendees, though, couldn't give a flying stab about the game and are quite content to

play what they've brought along. In addition to the games there is the Midcon Quiz, the Midcon Classic Darts Tournament, and the Midcon **Subbuteo** Championship. In short, a highly recommended event with something for everybody. Several GI writers will be in attendance, but don't let that put you off. For details and booking forms contact: Brian Williams, 30 Rydding Lane, Millfields Estate, W Bromwich B71 2HA.

Essen Gut

Last call for Essen, the greatest games show in the world. No less than 191 new games are being premiered. Tournaments, prizes, lectures, and excellent sausages. This mammoth event takes place at the Messe Halle in the Ruttenschied district of the city, Oct 19 to 22.

Chariots of mire

The game of the year in Sweden is, in case you were wondering, **Ave Caesar**, published by Ravensburger and reviewed in GI #6. Looks like it's been a bad year everywhere.

Burger not king

Apparently peeved at their failure to win the Spiel des Jahres prize, the giant German company Ravensburger have parted company with their product development manager Carla Willem and her assistant.

A replacement has not yet been announced, not is it known whether Ravensburger will continue to produce the 'simple' games that characterised the reign of Ms Willem.

Beastly

GDW are to launch a new boardgame entitled **Temple of the Beastmen**. If you are still reading this (*get on with it – Ed*) the action takes place on Mars as Terran adventurers attempt, by a process of deduction, to rescue slaves, treasures, and old Indiana Jones videos (what? – Ed) from the clutches of an alien with no taste in movies. In short, a sort of 'Consulting Martian'. Shipping, as they say, on 6th Nov (*our editor's birthday!*).

Cthulhu hounded

Electronic Arts' Lovecraft-based game will be hitting the streets soon, though without the **Call of Cthulhu** tag it might once have sported. **Hound of Shadow** features the obligatory stunning graphics and a sophisticated plot courtesy Eldritch Games. GI

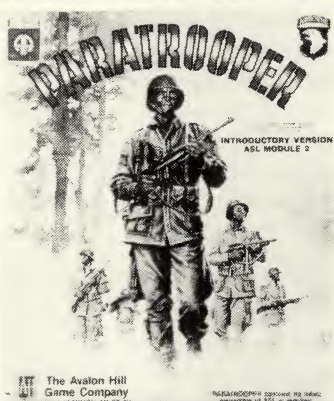
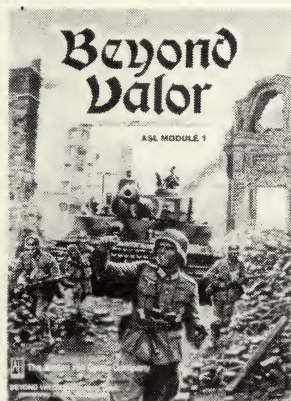


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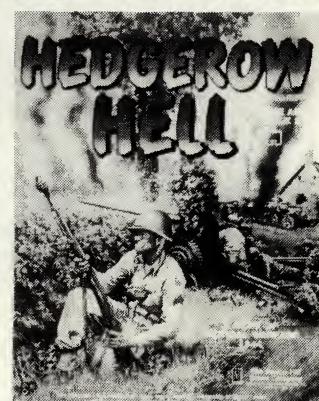
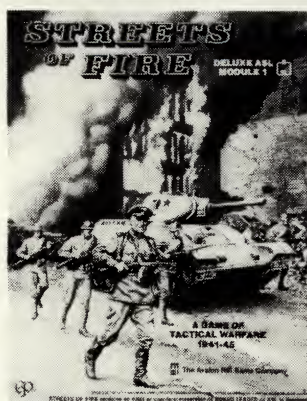
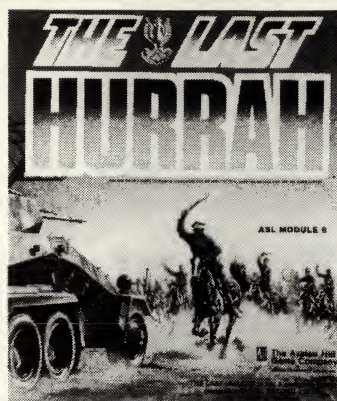
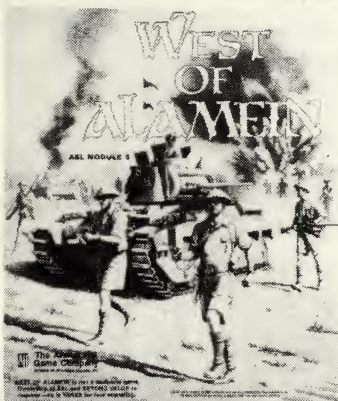
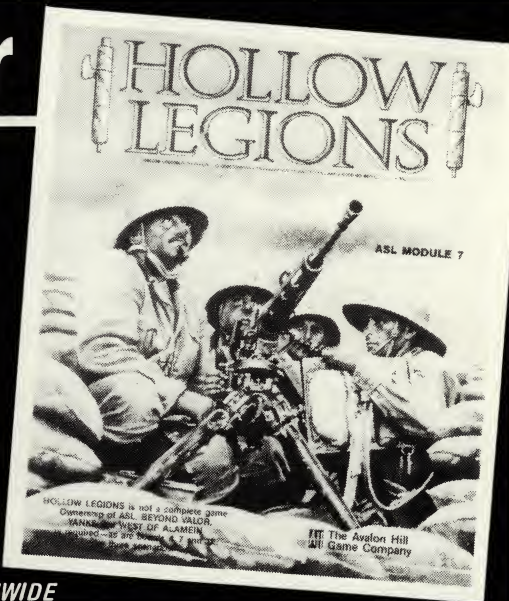
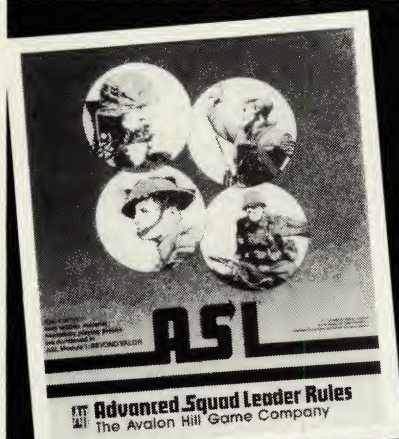


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REVIEWS

WARGAMES



TURNING POINT: STALINGRAD

DESIGNED BY
DON GREENWOOD

PUBLISHED BY
AVALON HILL

PRICE £20.45

Turning Point: Stalingrad presents gamers with the infamous Second World War battle of the Eastern Front in a playable and digestible format. This game is the last of three developed along a common theme of area movement and semi-simultaneous impulses. (The previous examples of the design philosophy were *Storm over Arnhem* and *Thunder at Cassino*, all published by Avalon Hill.)

Inside the box the buyer will find just under 400 counters of good quality. The combat units (representing battalions) are slightly larger than usual and are back printed. The front is the fresh side of the unit with the attack and defence strengths and movement allowance, as well as unit types and historical designations. Armour counters have well drawn silhouettes to set them apart from the standard NATO symbology that can pale after a while. On the back is the spent side of the unit, printed on a white background with a reduced defence strength. The counters are all brilliantly clear and beyond reproach.

The map board is a mounted 16" x 44" panoramic view of the western approach to Stalingrad. It is done on a scale of one inch representing 500 metres. As previously indicated it uses area movement. Each of the areas has an identification number and also a terrain effects modifier, the latter being used in combat and rubble creation. These vary from the relative open area of Vishnevaya Gully (+1) to the urban jungle of the Red Barricades Factory (+4).

HIGHLANDERS

The area depicted shows the west side of the Volga river, stretching from the Leather Factory in the south up through the city where the bloodiest fighting took place, to Little Mushroom and Big Mushroom in the north. Many of the features of the historical battlefield that I can recall from my reading on the subject are there. The dominating feature of Mamayev Kurgan is present along with the Red Barricades Factory, the tennis racket rail yards, the tractor factory and the infamous grain elevator. The overhead view is very well done indeed and gives the players an excellent impression of the battlefield. In the top left of the map board is the turn record chart and also the strategic movement display which con-

tains eight zones allowing off map movement and manoeuvre.

The rules are contained in a 16 page booklet (complete with a cover that appears to be the box cover artwork printed back to front!).

SOMETHING NEW

Anybody who has played the other two games in this series will have little difficulty in picking up the essentials, but they should still be aware there are a number of new developments which completely change one's approach to the game. Novices would do well to have a more experienced gamer show them the ropes.

Designer Don Greenwood has taken the lessons of the two previous games, used the historical flavour of this particular battle and provided wargamers with a stunning new challenge. **Turning Point: Stalingrad** is no idle amusement to while away a few moments of leisure time. It can certainly be enjoyed in that way, but it offers something more. In **TPS** the players are faced with a system that forces them to take chances.

The game turn sequence consists of alternating impulses. During the impulse, a player may activate the units which start off in one area. Each of the units may, subject to the rules, do different things but his activations may only be from the one area. Once that player has finished, his opponent gets an opportunity.

This creates fairly easily a semi-simultaneous type of movement which is identical to the previous games. The new wrinkle is devastating.

WHILE DAYLIGHT LASTS

In the previous games using this system each side could pass at will, particularly if the player knew that his opponent had to keep attacking. Thus games could sometimes become an attempt at outlasting your opponent so that you were left with a series of unopposed activations. That is a trifle overstated, but it was a criticism that could not be wholly deflected, until now.

Each complete turn now represents a day. Each day is split into daytime impulses and nighttime impulses. Each impulse that the German player has, he must roll the (two six-sided) dice. Impulses are numbered from 1-12 during the day and 3-12 at night.

If, during the day, the German player rolls a number which is less than or equal to the impulse number, there are no more day impulses and it becomes night. If, during the night impulse, the German rolls a number less than the impulse number, there are no more night impulses and a new day dawns. What this means is that subject to certain special rules for the first turn, the German player cannot guarantee that he will ever have enough time to do everything. If he starts the day (impulse three) and rolls a 3 he will not be too happy as his current impulse will be the last one! He cannot, as in other games, simply wait his turn, knowing that units will be guaranteed a move later on. The day can end at any time. It is brilliantly simple and it works.

During the impulses when units are being activated, they may engage in movement. Movement is dependent upon whether or not a unit is moving to an area which is adjacent to fresh enemy units. Once units have been activated, they are spent, more vulnerable and effectively out of the action until they recover.

There can also be combat, which can either take place in an area, or into an adjacent area. Units can combine movement and combat.

COMBAT

The combat system is similar to the two preceding games in the series. The offensive total is calculated and added to the score of two six sided dice. The defence total is calculated and added to the score of two six sided dice. For the attack to be successful, the offensive total has to be greater than the defensive. The modifiers allow the importance of organisational integrity, artillery and the different armies' capabilities during night and day to be accurately portrayed. Results are expressed as casualty points which must be satisfied by the owning player retreating or eliminating units, or flipping fresh units to become spent.

In the combat system Greenwood has also introduced a new feature: a variety of disruption levels. These are used in conjunction with the turn chart symbols. Each day is marked with a symbol which progresses in a series of four. These are such that September 14th is marked with

a hexagon, the 15th is marked with a circle, the 16th is marked with a square, the 17th is marked with a triangle and on the 18th we revert to a hexagon, then circle, then square, then triangle and so forth. If a unit suffers disruption it is marked with a disruption counter symbol matching the disruption duration.

With certain limited exceptions, actions may only be taken by fresh units. Accordingly both players have to pay careful attention to the attacks they undertake and the way that they defend. In other words they must carefully manage their resources. It is not advisable simply to wade in and attack on all fronts!

AMPLE SUPPLY OF CHROME

The game is liberally filled with chrome, dealing with supply (forcing units to have a supply line), armour replacements (simulating the Dzerhezinsky tractor works turning out tanks right throughout the battle), rubble, artillery, the Luftwaffe and reinforcements. The latter can be particularly nailbiting for the Russian player as his much needed troops try to make it over the Volga.

An introductory scenario is provided using only one half of the map and it is thoroughly recommended that even experienced players try this out, even solitaire, before they begin the fully fledged version. Because of the new tricks which are available if you start with the whole thing, you might bite off more than you can chew. The full game is a long undertaking. If you're not satisfied by what's in the box an expansion kit (unseen by yours truly) will take the battle on from October 4th to November 14th. These stages are likely to be a toe to toe stand up fight to the last man. Realistic, but not my cup of tea. What is in the box is ample entertainment.

The rule book is well rounded out with extensive players' notes. It would have been preferable, and made the rules more digestible for newcomers, had these examples been inserted into the body of the rules rather than being lumped in at the back of the book.

The back page of the rule book has a handy summary of some of the tables which mean that once you are familiar with the game (which should not take long) your concentration will be focused on the strategies on the board rather than the complexities of the rules.

It must be said that without extensive playing experience (months, not weeks!) little can be said about the play of the

game other than that no two games are the same. Because of the potential limitation on turn length and its random nature, there is a huge luck factor. The test of the designer's intention is whether or not this luck factor means that the game is simply about rolling dice. That is certainly not the case. In war, as in life, one has to learn to handle the fickle fortunes of fate. Over the course of a particular game, it is likely that the random factors will balance out, but even if this is not the case, a true measure of the ability to command (even cardboard troops) is how one manages to deal with these misfortunes.

Based on experience to date, however, **Turning Point: Stalingrad** plays well. Very well. There are a huge variety of strategies that can be tried. In particular there is much to challenge the German player. He has, of course, the burden of attack, but the Russian player frequently has to retake precious territory in order to buy time, particularly in the early turns. The early turns are categorised by greater movements until the forces settle in to sort it out over the precious few yards that were to decide the victor.

Turning Point: Stalingrad deserves to be a classic game if the early playings are anywhere near as accurate as I feel they

Star Ratings

First class game. Hall of Fame material

A good game, even if the subject doesn't appeal to you

Competent but nothing special

**

Not recommended unless you're especially interested in the subject



A true turkey

are. While the particular presentation of the rules is not to my liking this is a personal preference that must not discourage you. The rules address everything which has arisen to date and there are no problems of note.

The game is certainly not complex, probably falling into the middle category of complexity, and because of the random nature of the day turns, it is easily playable solitaire.

Of the year's wargame releases, this is my favourite, and deserves to be yours too. Each playing is different, each turn within a game is different and no two games are ever going to be the same. Excellent value for money in terms of 'games per buck', this deserves to be on every gamer's hit list. A five star package.

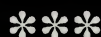
Ellis Simpson

ARNHEM BRIDGE

DESIGN UNCREDITED

PUBLISHED BY
ATTACTIX

PRICE £9.95



When I first became interested in historical boardgaming, the main contact point was Malcolm Watson, who formed Sim-Pubs UK to act as importer for *Strategy and Tactics* magazine plus the whole range of SPI products from the States.

Around the time SPI was taken over by TSR, Watson had decided that it was not too healthy to solely rely upon the SPI imports. Accordingly, he looked around and decided to introduce a new range, marketed as Attactix Adventure Games. One of the releases on this label was **Arnhem Bridge** which first came onto the market in 1982 and along with a few others has recently been re-released. The Attactix games were firmly aimed at the introductory level market, with the accent on playability rather than realism.

GEOGRAPHICAL OBJECTIVES

Arnhem Bridge (1989), comes with a quite beautifully coloured map on a four-piece jig-cut board, portraying the area where XXX Corps was supposed to drive up towards that 'bridge too far'. The only complaint one can have about the map is that the hexes aren't numbered, although the board edges have a letter and number grid around them; locating individually numbered hexes can be something of a bind.

The counters have a silhouette to indicate their type, and a combat strength. The unit types cover armour, engineer, motorised infantry, airborne and reconnaissance. The counters are back printed with their starting or their reinforcement information.

The system is simple with a move, fight, move, fight sequence. Combat is simulated by totalling the attacking strength, deducting the defending strength and adding the result of the roll of a D6. This result, after taking into account terrain and supply, will produce the final effect determining the success or failure of destruction and retreats and advances. To represent their effectiveness during the battle, the airborne troops are less susceptible to some of the more negative combat results. Victory is determined by a series of points acquired for fulfilling certain geographical objectives.

KAMIKAZE

To help novices understand what is going on there is an example, complete with sequential pictures on the map. This is a commendable practice and is executed in some detail. The rules, though, could have benefited by being numbered and indexed and more attention paid to layout. There is simply too much text to wade through, so much so that it would be surprising if a novice could manage this game on his own.

As a game, however, it is successful. There are no new mechanics nor dazzling ideas, and it is unlikely that hardcore gamers will find anything in it that will dissuade them from playing their favourites. It appears to be well balanced, although as a basic game the strategic options are limited: the XXX Corps tries to bludgeon its way through to relieve the airborne spearhead, while the Germans throw themselves under tanks, *kamikaze* style, to buy time for the Arnhem bridgehead to be wiped out. The play is nothing outstanding, but the game overall (rules

CHARTS

Wargames

- ① Hollow Legions (Avalon Hill)
- ② Imperium Romanum (West End)
- ③ Main Battle Tank (Avalon Hill)
- ④ World in Flames (Australian Design Group)
- ⑤ Harpoon (GDW)
- ⑥ RAF (West End)
- ⑦ Ambush (Victory)
- ⑧ ASL (Avalon Hill)
- ⑨ Beyond Valour (Avalon Hill)
- ⑩ Red Storm Rising (TSR)

Chart supplied by Virgin Games.

excepted) is a good introduction to gaming, especially at the price. For those looking for a little more meat there is a set of optional rules of which the free German set-up and (further) optional German off-map movement are the most interesting. The real tragedy of the game is that the hobby has moved on but games like this haven't. That is not to say it is out of its depth, simply that it could have been improved in the intervening years.

Ellis Simpson

IN NEXT ISSUE'S WARGAMES SECTION:

World in Flames – a monster game so expansive that Mike Siggins' review wasn't ready for this issue.

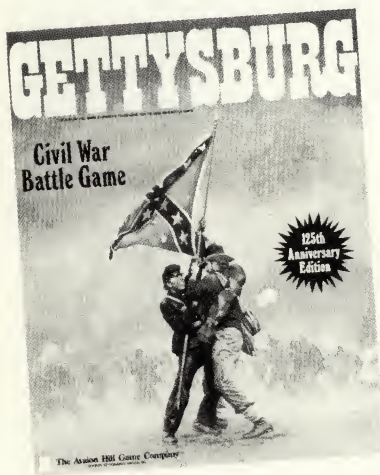
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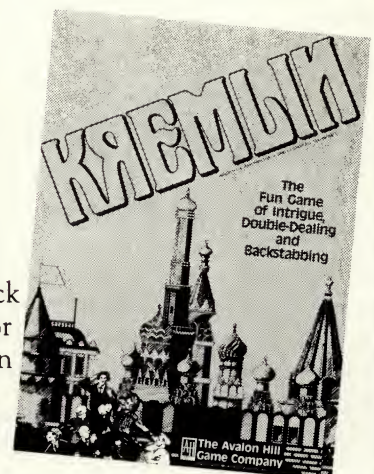
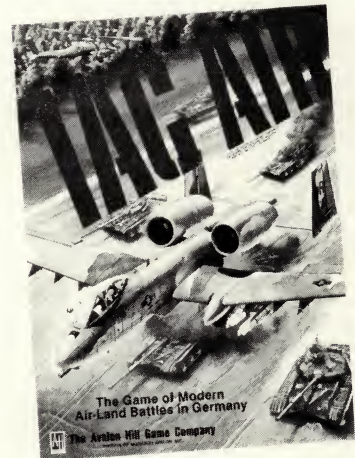
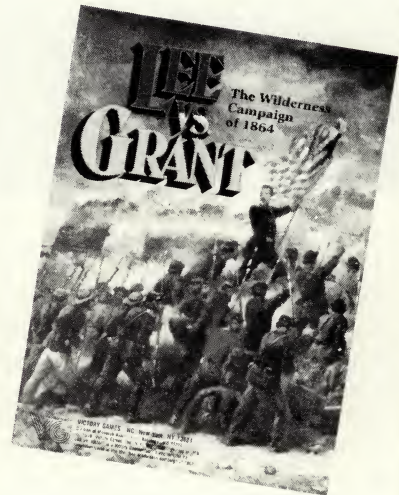
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MODERN NAVAL BATTLES

DESIGNED BY
DAN VERSSEN

PUBLISHED BY
3W

PRICE £16.45



Following in the wake of *Naval War*, and more recently *Enemy in Sight*, (reviewed in GI #1) comes this new offering from the California based World Wide Wargames. Like both these games the objective in *Modern Naval Battles* is to sink your enemy's ships by playing cards – a tactic that has not yet occurred to the superpowers. That you are unlikely to accomplish this goal with maximum efficiency is due entirely to the rule book which is both vague, poorly structured, and written in a style inappropriate for what is basically a simple game. The format used is that favoured by Avalon Hill and the late SPI: lots of numbered paragraphs and jargon which leads you to think that you are reading a legal document rather than instructions on how to play a game. This wouldn't be so bad were they at least complete, but nowhere could I find what constituted an 'Area Defense'. The illustrations next to this particular rule were useless: one was of the back of one of the cards! As if in anticipation of a flood of rule queries, the publishers kindly provide a five point briefing on how to phrase your questions. Thanks!

PEA SOUPER

As to the game itself, the main difference between it and its aforementioned predecessors is the 'fog of war' rule and, of course, the period in which it is set. At the start of your turn you roll a six-sided die to determine the 'foginess'. The result is the number of actions you are allowed. As you may deduce, if you roll a lot of 1s, then you have run into a real pea soup and you will not sink many ships. You may also deduce that this makes the game very luck oriented. You would be right. The die also plays a roll (oops) in air attacks which can be land based, or carrier based. Otherwise it's the same mixture as before, that is, play a card, hope to do

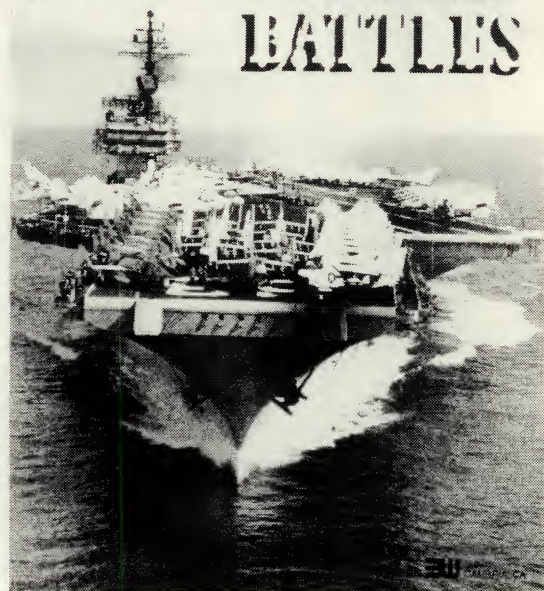
some damage and thereby score points. The defender tries to prevent this. After the carnage is completed, the attacker replenishes his hand back to seven. The winner is the first player to reach 180 points. This total can be altered to provide a longer or shorter game. An interesting option is provided whereby players may start the game with 86 points. Using these, they are able to buy cards and ships. The prices are listed in the rule book. This is described in the rule book as a 'tournament rule', but there seems to be no reason why this couldn't be incorporated as standard. At the start of each new round you could simply revive your initial set-up.

CLINICAL

The quality of the cards is good as are the graphics, but even so it's hard to see how such a fairly hefty price tag is justified.

The game is quite fun to play and inevitably provokes lots of whinges and vindictiveness from those types who don't know any better. However, it lacks that certain something which made *Enemy In Sight* such a joy. Possibly it's the fact that modern ships are blown clean out of the water, while the old galleons suffer a lingering death as you pray for a 'bucket brigade' to put out the fire. War in the modern era is much more clinical and less charming, in game terms at least.

MODERN NAVAL BATTLES



The rule book, though, must have the final say as it makes a cunning bid to be included in the next *Murphy's Rules*: 'while releases in the Modern Battles Card Game Series are intended to be fun, they also provide an interesting study of the topic of an East/West conflict.' As I've yet to come across any such study which includes Russian and American ships in the same fleet, as this game does, one can only wonder whether such a description somehow drifted in from another game.

Brian Walker

GI BACK ISSUES

Back issues of *Games International* are still available, featuring a selection of choice articles for wargamers. For example:

Issue one – Ellis Simpson on magazine games.

Issue three – Wargames Research Group, Tabletop and GDW miniatures wargames rules compared and analysed, once again by Ellis Simpson.

Issue four – Iron Mike Siggins' look at the Sky Galleons of Mars. Plus a scenario for *Test of Arms* by Norman Smith.

Issue six – Two firefight scenarios for *Platoon*, by Norman Smith.

Issue seven – A comprehensive review of air warfare games, by our man in the skies, Lee Brimicombe-Wood.

Issue eight – Mike Siggins surveys the green fields of Napoleonic wargames.

Our stocks of issue three are now dangerously low, so order now to avoid disappointment. For details, see the subscription form on page 6.

DESIGN NOTES

No, no, after you

Dave Berry

A common problem with the First World War air wargame *Sopwith* is that the best tactic is often to skulk around the edge of the board until the rest of the players have shot each other to pieces, and then zoom in for the kill. Unfortunately, if everybody does this the game can be a bit dull. The same problem applies to several games about gladiators.

I once played an ancients figure game where both my opponent and I deployed our armies on steep hills on either side of the table. The rest of the game consisted of waiting for each other to attack, since neither of us were willing to abandon our good defensive position to attack the other at a disadvantage. In the end we had an indecisive cavalry skirmish on one flank, packed up our armies and went home.

Why do people design games and scenarios like this? What is the point of a game where no one can make the first move without losing as a result?

It should be a rule of good game design that a conflict game must have a reason for conflict to occur.

In a well-designed two player scenario, at most one side will have a defensive position, and if one side does have a defensive position, then the other side will have to attack it. Furthermore, the attacking side should have some extra units or capabilities to offset the advantage of the defensive position. If you're playing a game in which you select troops up to a certain points total, defensive terrain should cost points.

Another approach is to ensure that at least one side's starting position is vulnerable to attack. Chess, a reasonably successful abstract wargame some of you may have heard of, uses this approach. (Admittedly you *must* move one piece a turn in Chess, but the initial position is vulnerable, none the less.) This approach also applies to multi-player games.

A third approach is illustrated by *Diplomacy*, a multi-player game where players start with balanced forces, but have to attack to survive. This isn't because the initial positions are particularly vulnerable as such, but because you gain strength by conquering territory. If you don't move, you become vulnerable.

Essentially I'm claiming that the starting position of a good game must be unstable. At least one player must have something

to gain by taking the initiative, whether that something is destroying a vulnerable opponent, building up more strength than other players, seizing territory needed to win (or at least gain a tactical advantage), breaking out of an encirclement before starving to death, or getting the convoy through before enemy reinforcements arrive.

For free-format two player games, the Wargames Research Group publish a book of scenarios by Charles Grant that is worth a look. Each scenario has a reason for the combat to occur. They're written for Napoleonic style armies, but the ideas can be adapted to most types of game.

I've heard it argued that multi-player games are less likely to stagnate than two player games, since the players can gang up on each other. Obviously people *do* gang up on each other, but in my experience this only occurs when it is already advantageous to move (for example, *Diplomacy*, *Dune*). It doesn't solve the problem itself (for example *Sopwith*, gladiator games).

So what can be done to *Sopwith*, for example? Well, you could add scenarios. First World War fighters rarely flew for the hell of it. They had objectives – observation, for example. One side could have to stay on the map for a certain length of time. This seems reasonable, but doesn't adapt well to a multi-player game, unless you play as teams.

You could add negative effects for not getting involved. For example, a plane more than *n* hexes away from all other planes for two turns in a row could be attacked by anti-aircraft fire (on the grounds that anti-aircraft fire can't be directed into dogfights, but if you're far enough away you've got to expect trouble). This seems a bit artificial.

Or you could rig the victory conditions. If pilots score points for the amount of damage they do, irrespective of whether they down other planes or not, there may be some reason for getting stuck in. If pilots can fly off the map when they are satisfied with their score, then they won't have to hang around to be shot at by players who skulk around the edge of the board.

In the end, though, I think games with no terrain, with low movement rates, with no way to build up strength, and with evenly matched forces, tend to make poor multi-player games. GI



REVIEWS

role games

GRIFFIN ISLAND

DESIGNED BY
CHAOSIUM

PUBLISHED BY
AVALON HILL

PRICE £8.95

Maybe it's just me. Maybe I've been role-playing for too long – as gamers go, I'm distinctly middle-aged at least. I can actually remember how in 1981 I sprinted down to the shops to buy **Griffin Mountain** – 'A complete wilderness campaign for **RuneQuest**'. The designer's notes pointed out that it was originally intended as a non-Glorantha package. Sanity prevailed, however, and it was placed to the north of Dragon Pass.

It was claimed to be (and was) a 'state-of-the-art' product. There had never been anything quite like it before. Previous scenario packs tended to present a relatively linear storyline; the adventure had a beginning, a middle, and an end, and characters more or less had to stick with it from start to finish. What made **Griffin Mountain** different was that, as the full title stated, it was *not* a scenario, but a complete campaign – a world of scenarios just waiting to happen. Herein certain non player characters happily went about their business regardless of what players characters were up to. Joh Mith rambled round with his caravan, and various dignitaries and villains were sufficiently detailed for a referee to gauge their reaction to the players.

There were a number of ways to use the pack: the first was easy – simply rummage through it for the occasional ready-made adventure. Players would be led into this, and the usual, linear game would ensue.

The other way to play it made some awesome demands on the referee, but was ultimately far more rewarding. It involved his becoming deeply knowledgeable about the whole pack. Players would then pick up the random rumours (true, false, or not quite true) and follow up those that caught their fancy. Whatever they decided to do, the referee could provide an adventure.

By now you're probably thinking: 'This is supposed to be a review of **Griffin Island**, not a nostalgic lament for the passing of **Griffin Mountain**'. Don't worry – what I've said above, except for the Glorantha setting, still applies to this new pack. And there are some improvements. As an island, it feels neater and more self contained. The map is rather good, containing numerous areas which are blank, except for the occasional scribble ('reports of lake here', 'Hostile elves – fire doesn't work', 'No monsters here'). Filling in these blanks will be one task awaiting the adventurers.

All the usual stuff is here – histories, non player characters, beasts, and tips on how to run the game. Some of the player handouts are particularly nifty, including some nicely characterised 'scripts' of what various non player characters will tell the characters (for example, the ship captain on the subject of dwarfs: 'Can't tell about 'em. Never seen any in Soldier Port.').

In conclusion, yes, I'm nostalgic for good old **Griffin Mountain**; yes, I am sorely vexed that **Griffin Island** is now non-Glorantha, and even contains such Tolkienesque abominations as orcs (ugh), but the bottom line is that this is a good pack. Even if you still have the older pack, it might be worth checking this out.

John Scott



Star Ratings

First class game. Hall of Fame material

A good game, even if the subject doesn't appeal to you

Competent but nothing special

**

Not recommended unless you're especially interested in the subject

*

A true turkey

GURPS CONAN

DESIGNED BY
CURTIS SCOTT

PUBLISHED BY
STEVE JACKSON

PRICE £9.99



Let's start with the physical side: the cover tells you all there is to know about Conan, with a nicely rendered painting showing everyone's favourite barbarian hero standing over a chained, semi-nude female, while repelling an attack from a large serpentine creature. The interior art is less impressive, varying in quality from passable to amateurish, but generally settling around the serviceable level. Looking beyond the art, the book is a 128 page perfect-bound softback, which now seems to be the standard format for GURPS worldbooks.

On to the contents. For the most part, the book avoids rules (after all, the GURPS Basic Set covers combat and magic quite comprehensively) being more of an extended sourcebook on the Hyborian Age. Bypassing a short introduction by L Sprague de Camp, we start to get to the meat of the product with a history of Hyboria. For someone who is not a complete Conan addict this section is a rewarding read, being informative, without adopting a text book style, and quite definitely setting the style of R E Howard's stories in the fashion that most referees should be able to emulate, should they wish. This leads nicely into character generation, which is laid out in the standard format, which now appears in all GURPS worldbooks. While there are few new skills or character traits, the author has taken great pains to redefine any items from the basic rules, which may have slightly different effects in a Hyborian campaign. I have to admit that I found this level of detail both refreshing and helpful, rather than leaving everything up to the referee's fiat.

After the character section, we find a bestiary of the creatures of Conan's world, which is a rare treat indeed! Lacking any equivalent of the *Monster Manual*, GURPS fantasy campaigns tend to be a little lacking in interesting sword fodder, but the seven pages in this book are a joy for any fantasy referee. All the creatures

covered are both interesting and well detailed. This section would almost warrant the book's purchase by any GURPS fantasy referee. After a functional, but uninspired chapter on religions there starts a gazetteer of the 34 lands in the world of Conan. It is here that the book really comes into its own. Each country is covered in a detail which I found surprising for such a book. Everything from the laws and religions of a country, through to its flora and fauna, and suggested character names, can be found for each country. Most licensed games can end up as just another generic game, with the odd famous non player character, but with a background like this, there is no excuse for losing the flavour of the Conan books. Each country's entry is rounded off with a short adventure idea for the referee to expand.

Magic is given a brief overview, but GURPS Magic is really needed here, as the Conan rules merely expand on that book. The only real rules section is a rather nice system for resolving mass combat, particularly with reference to how a battle affects player characters. While playable, it does rely quite heavily on number crunching and may not be to everyone's taste. The book ends with character statistics for Conan (in the various stages of his life), his friends and enemies, and a phenomenally comprehensive index to all the Conan stories.

Overall this is a most accomplished work, suitable for anyone who wants a world for their GURPS fantasy campaign, whether they're Conan fans or not. My only reser-

CHARTS

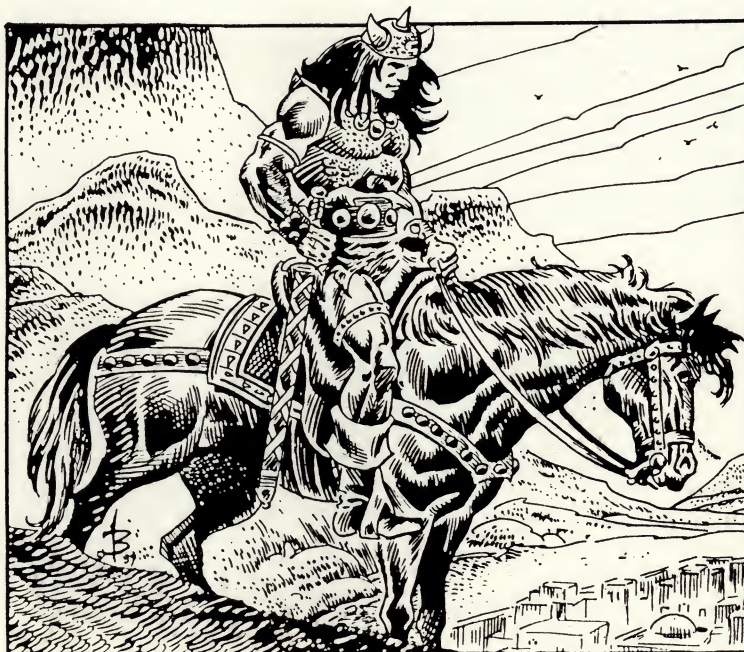
Rolegames

- ① AD&D 2nd Ed Monstrous Compendium (TSR)
- ② AD&D 2nd Ed Player's Handbook (TSR)
- ③ AD&D 2nd Ed Dungeon Master's Guide (West End)
- ④ Dark Mage Rhudaur (MERP, ICE)
- ⑤ Star Crown Empire (Shadow World, ICE)
- ⑥ Rolemaster (ICE)
- ⑦ Star Wars Rule Companion (West End)
- ⑧ Orgillion Horror (Shadow World, ICE)
- ⑨ FR8 (AD&D, TSR)
- ⑩ Shadowrun (FASA)

Chart supplied by Virgin Games.

ventions are the reliance on GURPS Magic and the lack of a complete referee scenario.

Mike Jarvis



DLE2 DRAGON MAGIC

AD&D SCENARIO

DESIGNED BY
RICK SWANN

PUBLISHED BY
TSR

PRICE £5.95

In this second part of a Krynn-based adventure trilogy, the players must defend the good dragon city of Cirulon from an attack by evil dragons. All is not as simple as it seems, however, and as the characters move further into the adventure, the full complexity of the plot slowly un-

folds, revealing them to be in the midst of an epic adventure with more than their lives at stake.

At least that's the theory. How does it work in practice? Well, the answer is, quite well. Although this is hardly setting new standards for fantasy adventures, it is an enjoyable enough romp through the planes in an attempt to stop the attacks at their source. The module is well presented, including a large colour map of Cirulon, and several rather nice illustrations. I was a little disappointed to find that the new monsters for the adventure are not illustrated: surely they deserve that? My only other quibble is of the lack of provision for player generated characters, rather than the pregenerated ones supplied. I can see no reasons why a referee should not allow players to use their own 7th-9th level Krynn characters in this adventure. While not indispensable, you could do far worse if you are looking for a couple of evenings' adventure.

Mike Jarvis

THE WEIRD, WEIRD, WEST

MARVEL
SUPERHEROES
SCENARIO

DESIGNED BY
JEFF GRUBB

PUBLISHED BY
TSR

PRICE £4.95

**

Once again, the future of the world as we know it is under threat, in this **Marvel Superheroes** adventure. This time, however, the danger is emanating from the past, specifically 1871. The heroes must travel (in a rather convenient time machine) to the Old West, in an attempt to put the entire Marvel universe to rights. On arriving they find that the West is now full of a wide variety of historical characters who have no place there; not to mention the odd alien invasion. Our heroes must repel the aliens, while at the same time finding the cause of the time warp that has wrecked Earth's history.

I have to admit that I'm not greatly enamoured with this product. It's not that it is a bad scenario as such; merely that it isn't particularly original. The plot reminds me a little of Pacesetter's **Time Master** adventure *Timestorm*, although, it has to be said, that scenario had a greater scope. Even if your players don't mind the rather stilted plot, then they may just be put off by the lack of superhero-style atmosphere. While the author has to be admired for trying to produce a scenario that gets away from the usual comic book clichés of street fights and mass destruction, the fact remains that most superhero gamers play these games because they like doing just these things! Another more minor problem is in the selection of player characters for the adventure. One of them is Moon Knight, who is really out of place in this style of plot (even if a low powered character like him is more suited to the villains of the piece), while another is The Vision, who, you are informed, is probably best not played until *The West Coast Avengers* comic has defined the character better!

I have to say that this is a lacklustre product, probably best suited to **Time Master** or **Doctor Who** referees who aren't afraid of a little hard work. As a superhero adventure it didn't inspire me, and probably won't thrill your players either.

Mike Jarvis

DECEPTION AT DASA

CITY-STATE OF THE
INVINCIBLE OVERLORD
SCENARIO

DESIGNER
TERRY RANDALL

PUBLISHER
MAYFAIR

PRICE £8.45

**

Deception at Dasa was perhaps so named because deception was the only word beginning with 'd' that the author could think of. There is little trickery or illusion in the one lightweight adventure apart from that which to the players will be transparently obvious. **Deception at Dasa** does little to deviate from rather dated stereotypical fantasy.

Power levels are perhaps alarming too: it quickly becomes apparent that the characters' opponent is a demigod and that they will need some powerful artefact – which their target conveniently provides – to overcome him. **City State** might well have come some way since its first incarnation under the Judges Guild banner, but its supplements are little better than the firm's other products of that time.

Mayfair Games says that **Deception at Dasa** can be used independently, but there isn't enough in the package to provide satisfaction. What is needed successfully to run a small campaign pack is political information which the referee can use to create further adventures. **Deception at Dasa** makes do with lists of creatures, geographical details and the odd location of interest. Characters so far starved of adventure will probably die from malnutrition when it comes to making use of this guidebook.

For those players and referees, however, that are satisfied with the usual fare provided by **Invincible Overlord**, the snippets of information will probably help build the series into a usable campaign. But at what cost . . . ?

Ian Marsh

THE GREAT OLD ONES

CALL OF CTHULHU SCENARIOS

DESIGNED BY
MARCUS L ROWLAND,
KEVIN A ROSS, HARRY
CLEAVER, DOUG
LYONS, L N ISINWYLL

PUBLISHED BY
CHAOSIUM

PRICE £9.99



This chunky book comprises six adventures set in the 1920s. Although it is suggested that they can be played as a linked campaign, this is a superficial addition by the editors. Don't expect an intricate campaign along the lines of *Masks of Nyarlathotep*: this is strictly set-piece stuff. As with almost all commercial scenario material, *The Great Old Ones* is designed for players who don't mind having their actions relatively circumscribed.

Although plenty of maps and handouts are provided, the artwork in this book is distinctly below par. I feel that picturing Lovecraftian horrors is a mistake in any case, but portraying them in illustrations of mediocre quality is unforgivable.

The Spawn – the first scenario – is set against a background of labour strife in a mine in New Mexico. I was interested to see the involvement of the Industrial Workers of the World, an anarchistic radical labour movement known colloquially as 'The Wobblies' but saddened that the plot was a stock *Call of Cthulhu* chestnut. It seems to me that too many writers for the game are more concerned with what Mi-Go eat for breakfast (or some other tedious trainspotterish ecological preoccupation) than in generating atmosphere.

In *Still Waters* we are introduced to another couple of dodgy mansions, and yet more 'mythos creatures' (a euphemism for 'new monsters' that fails to add any dignity or worth to the idea in my eyes). Here, Sanity is used not as a means of dramatic punctuation, but simply as a crude

penalty and reward system: if the investigators don't get everything right then each 'loses 1D4 SAN, realizing that potent Mythos agents have slipped away.'

Travelling a short distance to New Orleans leads us in to *Tell Me, Have You Seen the Yellow Sign?* An occult conspiracy afoot during Mardi Gras? Surely not! Unfortunately the possibilities inherent in a carnival with *Alice in Wonderland* as its theme, connected with a dream-warping symbol (the 'Yellow Sign' of the title) are not realised, and what we are left with is standard investigative fare: break into buildings, research in libraries, question people, and then have a mind-wrenching (well, lose nD10 points of SAN) finale.

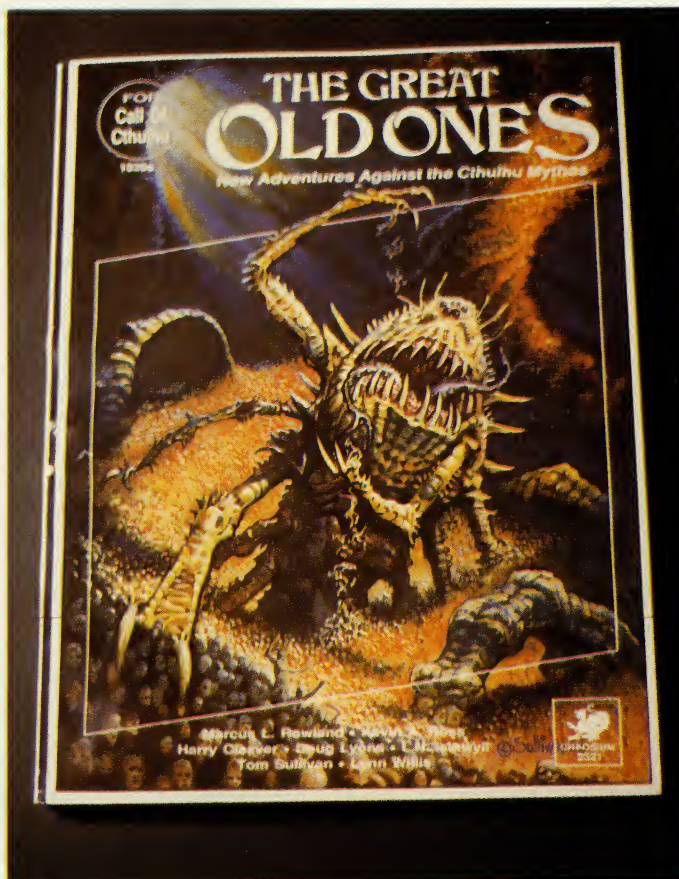
The fun of *One in Darkness* is to be found in the encounters with Boston criminals. Mythos matters soon overshadow this pleasantly cinematic foreplay, however, and we find ourselves in yet another brush with ol' Nyarlathotep, the chucklesome Outer God beloved of scenario writers who can't think of anything else to bung in at the end of their scenario. At least he doesn't turn up personally (or does he? And that's more mystery than you'll get out of this scenario).

'In this adventure the investigators confront a minor Great Old One.' That says it all for *The Pale God*, I'd have said. But in case you don't agree, I'll point out that the source for this oxymoronic entity is a story by Ramsey Campbell, and that if your players have read said story it rather dampens the impact of the plot. At least here we travel from New England to the real thing, and the feel edges into David Cronenberg territory. Though the ideas are still based soundly within the mythos, they could be executed most effectively by a referee prepared to dwell on the unnameable horrors people *really* fear – those which lie within the human body (having seen movies such as *Shivers* and *The Brood* would be of some use here).

Finally we have *Bad Moon Rising*, easily the best of the bunch from the point of view of imaginative adventurousness. From the traditional weird goings on (in the Lancashire of the Hovis adverts) it escalates into something . . . entirely different. To say more would give the game away, and this scenario, more so than any other in the pack, relies on secrecy and surprise for its effect.

Overall, the problem with this book is one of saturation. How on earth can Lovecraft's horrors retain a shred of horror when they are invoked with such frequency, dissected, analysed, pictured and otherwise abused? *Call of Cthulhu* played as a series of set piece scenarios involving mythos creatures every time degenerates into D&D played with shotguns. There is plenty of inventiveness here but little originality. The threat of madness, one of the greatest allures and most effective tools in the game is here reduced throughout (with the possible exception of *Bad Moon Rising*, for reasons I can't go into) to a cheap currency of penalty and reward. *The Great Old Ones* would have benefited from two of its scenarios having no mythos content. As it is, it'll satisfy diehards who are used to the standard Cthulhu plots, but only *Bad Moon Rising* will hold any appeal for more casual gamers.

Paul Mason



SHADOWRUN

DESIGNED BY
**BOB CHARRETTE, PAUL
HUME AND TOM DOWD**

PUBLISHED BY
FASA

PRICE £17.95



Shadowrun is set in the year 2050, in a world that mixes the neon bleakness of cyberpunk with the archetypal denizens of high fantasy. Thus characters play humans, elves, orcs and trolls etc in a grimy, high-tech nightmare of the near future.

The **shadowrun** rolegame comes in a 208 page hardback, beautifully laid out and with some of the best illustration I've seen outside of French rolegames. The pictures help evoke the grim, downbeat ambience typical of the cyberpunk genre and the text is interspersed with quotes that serve to add atmosphere. The rules writing also is excellent: clear and readable with plenty of examples to illustrate game mechanics. Blank character sheets, non player character sheets and an equipment table are included at the back and these are perforated for easy removal. However, few of the game charts and tables appear on these sheets, forcing players and referees to constantly flick back and forth through the book.

Players are encouraged to start playing immediately by the inclusion of 16 glossy plates each giving statistics and an illustration for an archetypal **Shadowrun** character. Each character has up to nine attributes, which for starting characters are rated numerically between one and six. Specialised skills are also listed, along with any cybernetic implants a character may wear. Details such as contacts, equipment and magical spells are also given, along with a commentary and some quotes from each character about themselves and their world. Character generation rules are given for those players who don't want to play an archetype, but otherwise the plates can help kick-start new players into a campaign.

The system is beautifully elegant. An attribute or skill level represents the number of six-sided dice a player rolls to succeed in any test or task. Any time a player has to roll, the referee sets a target

number ranging from 2 (a simple task), through 5 and 6 (challenging or difficult) to 10 (nearly impossible!). The player then rolls his dice and then assesses each dice individually to see if it equalled or beat the target number. Any rolls of one automatically fail with those die, while rolls of six are allowed to roll again and add to the previous 'six', which allows players to beat target numbers greater than six. Overall success in a task is based on the total number of dice that beat the target number, with a large number of successes signifying a better result.

This system has a straightforward logic to it that is easy to grasp and simple to play. Also, because all the target numbers are integers between 2 and 10, the referee has little hassle in establishing difficulties for any tests or tasks, making it very flexible. Rolls are based on attributes or specialised skills, although attempts to perform tasks that characters are not skilled in force the players to consult the 'Skill Web'. This is a neat little chart that shows how skills can default to a character's base attributes.

Combat is fast, with the emphasis on action, and relies on the same simple logic that prevails throughout the system. If anything, combat tends slightly toward player character survivability, but with an arsenal of high-tech weaponry at the players' disposal, the carnage is easy to come by.

The meat of the game lies in the designer's background rationale, a mish-mash of science fiction and magical fantasy. The **Shadowrun** world is based on a future history in which magical and mythic powers have been re-awakened. Some men and women have tapped these powers to become sorcerers, while other humans have been mutated by magic into archetypal elves, dwarfs and orcs. All, however, strive to survive in a degenerate, technocratic, nightmare society underpinned by the corporate Zaibatsu and the underworld of the Yakuza. It is from this background that the game attempts to derive its interest, by showing the conflict between high magic and technology.

ARCHETYPES

BURNED-OUT MAGE

"Don't listen to all that crap about a mage being on top of the world. It's a con, a slick, a con-... a lie. Casting spells is surely a kick, but it doesn't last a lifetime. Even if you don't ever get hurt or run the shadows, you can't toss fireballs forever. Age'll get you if nothing else does. You'll be left howling for the touch of the power, knowing that to call it again will kill you. So what do you do? You take a good, long look at the writing on the wall, my friend. Like I have. The Magic may work well for a kid, but nobody stays young. Sooner or later, you have to face the fact that bodies wear out. But that's not the end, you know. Not anymore. They can rebuild you now. Make you stronger, faster, better. You may not be able to toss a fireball, but who needs a fireball when you can pack an HK227 S&C? I may not be throwing fireballs anymore, but me and my little HK familiar can conjure you quite a bit of effective magic."

Commentary: The Burned-Out Mage has become disillusioned with the path common to those capable of utilizing the magical energies. He has bartered his magical capability away in favor of technological enhancements. The trade has left him bitter and cynical, at least outwardly.

Attributes:	Skills:
Body: 3	Conjuring: 4
Quickness: 2 (3)	Etiquette (Corporate): 2
Strength: 3 (4)	Etiquette (Street): 2
Charisma: 1	Firearms: 2
Intelligence: 4	Magical Theory: 4
Willpower: 4	Sorcery: 4
Essence: 1-4	Stealth: 2
Magic: 1	Unarmed Combat: 2
Reaction: 3 (5)	

Cyberware:

- Cybereyes with Thermographic Imaging
- Wired Reflexes: 1
- Muscle Replacement: 1
- SkinWares: 4
- Smartgun Link
- Skidsoft (Fichetti Pistol: 4)

Contacts:


- Barrender
- Mr. Johnson
- Street Doc
- Tallstranger

Gear:

- Lined Coat
- DocWagon™ Contract (gold)
- Fichetti Pistol with Smartgun Adapter
- Two Specific Spell Focuses (1 point each, choose spell)
- 1 Trauma Patch (5)

Spells:

- Analyze Device: 5
- Analyze Truth: 5
- Armor: 4
- Clairvoyance: 5
- Heal Moderate Wounds: 5
- Hibernata: 4
- Invisibility: 4
- Mana Bolt: 5
- Mind Probe: 5
- Sleep: 5
- Telekinesis: 5



SHADOWRUN 33

The magic system is instantly forgettable owing to its reliance on a list of spells. I do wonder whether the time will come when designers will begin to trust players with magic systems that are far more free-form so that we can throw away the spell lists. Far more interesting than the magic are the rules for the Matrix, which is *Shadowrun*'s equivalent of cyberspace. The Matrix is a global computer network, an abstract hallucination of data to which deck jockeys (futuristic computer 'hackers') can 'jack in' to commit computer espionage. Full rules are provided for role-playing within the Matrix, including programming, hacking into systems, cracking 'ICE' and fighting bad guys in the network. Of all the rolegame interpretations of cyberspace yet designed, this is definitely the best. It remains fairly faithful to the cyberspace portrayed in the Cyberpunk 'bible' *Neuromancer*, yet gives the impression of being playable and complete.

No rolegame cyberpunk world would be complete without a list of gadgets and cyberware including all the old favourites such as monofilament whips, flechette pistols, datajacks, cortex bombs, hand razors, blah, blah . . . However, though they are fairly comprehensive, the lists lack the heady mix of style and brand

names that we have come to expect as typical of the genre, an unusual omission on the part of the designers. Similarly, some of the more interesting aspects of technopunk lore, such as drugs and biotechnology (vatgrown ninja, replicant pets and the like), are largely absent or incomplete.

The final sections of the book help the referee create the world of *Shadowrun* including rules for medical aid, elective surgery, 'fencing' loot and a glossary of slang. Much of this 'atmosphere creating' stuff appears to have been lifted verbatim from the pages of William Gibson, but I don't suppose that is too much of a bad thing. Experience is awarded by 'Karma Points' which can either be saved to increase skills or burned away during play to aid the character's die rolling. A manual of monsters from high fantasy (including dragons, unicorns, basilisks et al) is also given, although what any self-respecting dragon would be doing in a cyberpunk future is anybody's guess!

And this is the problem with *Shadowrun*. A rolegame is more than just a system, it is a concept, and the concept of derivative D&D-style fantasy simply does not sit at all comfortably in a cyberpunk universe. The essence of cyberpunk is sex, drugs,

grime, cynicism and high-tech violence overlain with a slick coating of style. It is a genre that deliberately blurs the line between man and machine, biology and technology while the presence of magic, at least in the High Fantasy style presented in *Shadowrun*, only serves to define this line and throw it into sharp relief. Similarly, the dumping of elves, dwarfs and orcs into this technopunk environment fails to work. The two genres clash too much to be effectively merged in this way.

Now, I'm sure it is possible that a horror or dark fantasy setting might have fitted in with the futuristic theme, and the fact this wasn't done points to an opportunity missed. Instead we are left with a misshapen mutant: an excellent and well written cyberpunk game system grafted crudely to derivative magical High Fantasy. However, I am sure that my misgivings will not prevent the game from shifting by the truckload. After all, there is a certain appeal to dressing elven women in Lycra catsuits and razor-tipped psycho-boots, or having orcs in Kevlar combat armour with heavy machine guns.

Lee Brimmicombe-Wood

ROLE • CALL

Paul Mason

Now that we've started covering computer games, I thought I'd turn my attention to the idea of role-playing using a computer. My own opinion is that the so-called 'computer role-playing games' are no such thing. I may be very old fashioned, but to me role-playing games involve characters interacting with each other. The interaction in computer games is not yet at a sufficiently advanced level that I'd call it communication, though leaps are being made all the time. Furthermore, in a rolegame, the motivations and goals of the characters are determined by the players, whereas in a computer game you have little choice but to follow the pre-fabricated plot.

All of this sounds rather negative, I suppose, but I'm not enough of a luddite to

suggest that computers will never be able to act as a medium for true rolegaming. Advances are being made that will enable normal role-playing to take place within an artificial world created by the referee, and presented by the computer. Goggles will project a video simulation that responds to movements of the head. Sound effects and speech from other players (properly attenuated for distance) can be passed through headphones.

The technology required for this 'responsive environment' exists now. The 'mech simulators designed by FASA (and mentioned by James Wallis in his Gencon review on page 47) represent the first crude, faltering steps in this direction. Until we have full interaction, though, you're welcome to *Dungeon Master*, *Pools of Radiance* and the rest—I'll stick to my twice weekly gaming sessions, thank you very much!

DRAGONS IN THE NORTH

For three years, Drakon has provided Scots rolegamers with an opportunity to get together in amenable circumstances and raise money for charity at the same time. This year's event was attended by about 160 people, including a number of newcomers to the hobby. A wide age

range was present, and gamers travelled from as far afield as Liverpool and Aylesbury to be there. Sandy Douglas and his team of organisers would like to thank all those who supported this year's event, and look forward to seeing everyone back again next year for Drakon '90.

FANTASTIC LANGUAGE

There aren't many books dealing with role-playing games. Leaving aside introductory texts such as *What is Dungeons & Dragons?* and Ian Livingstone's *Dicing With Dragons* there are only Gary Gygax's execrable *Role-Playing Mastery* and Gary Alan Fine's *Shared Fantasy*—the latter a sociological study of the rolegaming phenomenon (it says here).

A classic book that should be on every fantasy gamer's shelves, however, is *The Language of the Night* by Ursula LeGuin. This collection of essays on the nature of fantasy and fantasy fiction is chockablock with ideas for rolegaming and as luck would have it has recently been published in the UK by the Women's Press. At £5.95 it's a bargain, so I urge you to race into your local Feminist bookshop post haste and acquire a copy immediately.

GI

CITIES FEATURE

Tales of the City

RUNNING CITY ADVENTURES

Paul Mason

Everyone knows how to run a dungeon. When the adventurers enter a room you read out the description and then see what they do. A city is rather more problematic. Do you plan the whole city, then ait for the players to walk into the first building and take it from there? I don't think so. Running a city like a dungeon is a sure way of making your cities seem ridiculous.

The alternative presented in most scenario packs is to herd your players through the plot like so many sheep. All you need plan are the bits the players will encounter. Well, I don't enjoy this 'Thatcheresque' approach (as Dave Morris dubbed it) either as a player or referee. The way to avoid these two extreme is to gain a feel for the city, and then work out only what need be worked out. This is where commercial city packs can be both a blessing and a hindrance. A blessing, because they give you plenty of information that most people (myself included) simply wouldn't have time to plan. A hindrance, because unless the author is good at conveying points simply, you won't be able to get sufficient feel for the city to run it convincingly.

In the subsequent issues of GI we'll be reviewing most of the city products that have been released with a view to establishing which are generally useful, which are tied to an established background, and which are simply useless. We'll also (space permitting) be developing more ideas about how to make city adventures memorable, and feature a sample scenario to give an idea of the way things can go. G

TREDROY GURPS SUPPLEMENT

DESIGNED BY
ALEXANDER VON THORN

PUBLISHED BY
STEVE JACKSON

PRICE £5.95

The traditional rolegame city derives much of its appeal from diversity. An unholy hotchpotch of humanity and non-humanity, eking out their lives within the dark city streets. Unfortunately the innate stupidity of this arrangement often becomes too overwhelming to ignore. In **Tredroy** there is a logical diversity. The city is set on the (rather undeveloped) **GURPS** fantasy world of Yrth, but could easily be placed in any campaign with a reasonably medieval feel.

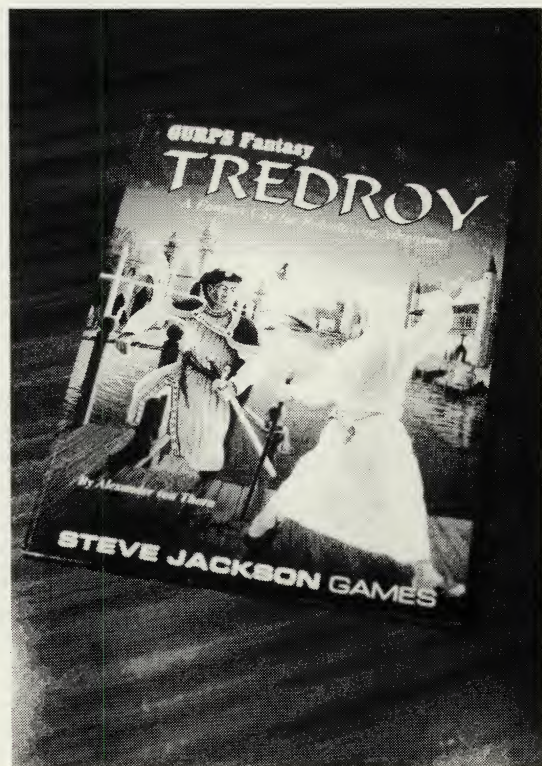
The city is a meeting of ways – the conflux of the Blueshoal and Lorian rivers, and the religions of Islam and Christianity (though there are followers of Judaism, and some even more obscure religions within the city). The political interplay between the city's factions is well handled, and the book conveys an appealing feel of the uneasy peace between faiths.

History, economics, customs and the like are dealt

with in sufficient detail to spark off plenty of scenario ideas, but not so much that they become boring. Half of the 64 page book is devoted to describing people and places of interest, and sketching a short scenario. Here the middle eastern flavour comes into its own, though some might find *Trail of the Serpent* a little over-magical for a 'realistic' campaign.

My one gripe about this book is the map. The centre pages are given over to a visual representation of Tredroy that would be more at home in Manhattan than in a medieval culture. Streets are organised in neat straight lines separating city blocks, and each quarter of the city has a 'Downtown'. Alexander von Thorn knows his stuff, so I can only assume that this rubbish was foisted on the product by the production team. As it stands, Tredroy is a fine city, but if you need a map, you'll have to draw it yourself.

Paul Mason



CONVENTION REPORT

Gencon® 1989

MILWAUKEE
August 10–13

James Wallis

The centre of Milwaukee is a beautiful, if quiet, area, so why the good citizens of that town are prepared to put up with 10 000 crazed gamers for a hectic weekend in August is a mystery. But they do, and what's more this is the 22nd time they've done it. Gencon is organised by TSR, but the fact that it is possibly the second largest gaming convention in the world (after Essen) shows that it is not restricted just to role-playing.

Gencon officially starts on the Thursday, but by Wednesday evening the bars and restaurants are packed with gamers of many nationalities. Americans dominate, but Canada, Australia, Japan and of course the UK all made a good showing. Activities started promptly on Thursday morning at Mecca, the conference centre. To guarantee a place in a game it should be booked in advance, but long queues of latecomers headed for any leftover tickets.

The main crowd puller in the dealer's room wasn't a new game, but the four **Battletech** simulations that FASA had brought. Featuring 'realistic' cockpits with full instrument readouts and stunning computer graphics generated by an uneasy blend of IBM and Amiga hardware, the 'mech simulators seemed to spend a lot of time in the garage for repairs, but FASA are hoping to have all the problems ironed out soon and are apparently thinking of opening a 'mech simulator centre in Chicago. Meanwhile their other showcased item, the **Shadowrun** role-playing system, was just one of a number of new products leaping on the 'Cyberpunk' bandwagon. The original **Cyberpunk** rolegame, published by R Talsorian Games (reviewed in GI #5) won the Gamer's Choice award for Best SF RPG, and among the companies scrabbling for a piece of the action are ICE (**Cyberspace**), Steve Jackson Games (**GURPS Cyberpunk**) and West

End, who will be doing a **Paranoia/Cyberpunk** crossover in association with R Talsorian Games soon.

The other main trend among the new products was for reissues. TSR were advertising the latest additions to the **AD&D2** line up, most notably the **Monstrous Compendium**; and elsewhere one could buy second editions of **Ghostbusters** (West End), **Ars Magica** (Lion Rampant), the **Palladium RPG** (Palladium Books) and **Mekton** (R Talsorian Games). Mayfair Games plan to have the second edition of the **DC Heroes** rolegame, using the same mechanics as their hugely successful **Batman** rolegame, out before Christmas, and will also be re-releasing **Chill**, previously published by the now defunct Pacesetter. Finally Hero Games/ICE released the third edition of **Champions** at Gencon, and **GURPS 3** (Steve Jackson) took the award for best fantasy game.

Back on the West End Games stand, a curious 'teaser' campaign was in operation, which involved small cards with plastic rocks attached, and the assurance that gamers should hang onto them because they might be the only thing that could save their characters in a year's time. The West End staff claimed to be under oath not to reveal more, but I got the impression that they were as much in the dark as I was.

Among the weirder rolegames making an appearance were **Macho Women With Guns** and its two supplements **Renegade Nuns on Wheels** and **Batwinged Bimbos from Hell**; all loosely based on a spoof in Steve Jackson's book *Murphy's Rules*. The Australian Games Group were displaying **Lace and Steel**, a swashbuckling game in a fantasy setting with a number of innovative mechanisms and some lovely design; and finally Stellar Games were selling **It Came From The Late, Late, Late Show** in which players play actors in bad horror movies. Silly stuff indeed.

Just to prove that Stellar Games don't take this hobby seriously at all, they were also selling their 'Potion of Paper Aging' – a bottle of chemicals which, when put

on a piece of paper will oxidise it, giving it the appearance of authentic aging. Just what you've always wanted . . .

Board games and wargames take second place at Gencon, but nonetheless a number of manufacturers were showing their new ideas. Most notable was **Abalone**, a coffee table abstract strategy game on a hexagonal board, bearing a few similarities to the old Spears game **Push**, but with far more potential. Also present was the **Obol**, or **Game of O**, which is best described as 3D draughts played on a spherical board with Velcro pieces. Like **Abalone**, it is easy to learn but much more difficult to play well. Avalon Hill were showing off **Turning Point: Stalingrad** and TSR were running demonstrations of their 'new' brainchild **Maxi Bourse** and the revamped **Dungeon!** boardgame. Upstairs, a large area had been set aside for miniatures wargaming, where players were eagerly destroying most of Europe and, on a similar note, Flying Buffalo promised delivery of the third part of their atomic war trilogy, **Nuclear Proliferation**, sometime next year.

Gencon is certainly larger and perhaps more commercially-based than any other convention I've attended, but its emphasis and atmosphere are firmly on game playing rather than game selling. Quite possibly the most fun one can have in the American mid-West. Hey Brian, can I go back next year? (*Who gave you permission to return?* – Ed)

James Wallis

IN NEXT ISSUE'S ROLEGAMES SECTION

The cities feature expands, with reviews of many more cities products, and a city scenario.

Marcus L Rowland demonstrates how a scenario idea often works best when transplanted to another setting.

REVIEWS

Computer Games

POPULOUS

DESIGNED BY
KEVIN CORPES AND
JAMES MOLYNEUX

PUBLISHED BY
ELECTRONIC ARTS

PRICE £14.95

Game Play: **

Graphics: ***

Available for the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST. Reviewed on the Atari.

Computer gamers have been almost battered to death over the last few months by articles and rave reviews concerning this game. There seems little point in this review trying to alter the opinions of those who have suffered or succumbed to that battering. Instead I shall be trying to determine whether, as some have claimed, **Populous** is so good, it is worth buying a computer just to play it.

The first thing to realise is that, despite all the pseudo-mystical claptrap, this is essentially a wargame. You take on the role of a god (good or evil – your choice) and your opponent, whether it be the computer or another player plonking away on his own computer linked to yours by a cable or modem, takes on the role of a rival god. The two gods do battle for control of a world, and as is the way with computer games, when you have successfully cleaned up on one world, there is always another (slightly harder) world waiting for you to grace with your divine presence.

WALKABOUT

The world as a whole is represented by a map on a graphic image referred to as the 'Book of Worlds' – presumably the 'Observer Book of Worlds'. Generally this map consists of a few large continents

floating around in a large sea area. On one land mass you can see a load of white 'ants' running around. These represent the settlements of the 'good guys' who worship the good god. On a separate land mass you can see a smattering of red 'ants'. These represent the settlements of the 'bad guys' who follow the ways of the evil god. By placing your cursor on a part of the 'Book of Worlds' you can zoom in on that area. The chunk of land (or sea) you have chosen to zoom in on is shown on a section of the screen referred to as the 'Close Up Map'.

On the close up map you can see that those 'ants' are in fact human-shaped bipeds, referred to as 'Walkers' because they spend a lot of their time wandering around looking for a flat piece of land on which to settle. They also spend a lot of their time propagating, but the game designers declined to name them after this activity for obvious reasons. The bigger the stretch of flat land, the bigger the settlement the walkers will form. The smallest possible settlement is a mud hut, and the largest is a castle. Once they have settled, they get down to the business of breeding; mercifully this is not shown on screen. As soon as a settlement's population capacity is exceeded, out pops a walker to wander off somewhere else and start a new settlement. Mud huts turf out walkers a lot quicker than do castles, so it follows that if a tribe is to spread out quickly it is better for them to settle in mud huts rather than congregating in castles. This is where the god can use his power to influence their destiny...

COSMIC

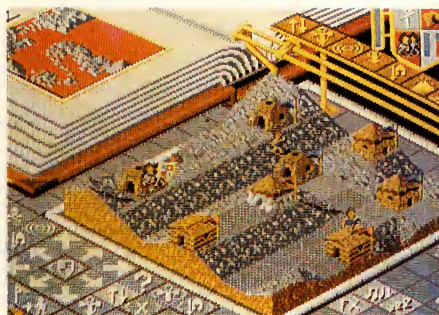
As every fantasy role-player knows, gods derive power ('mana') from being worshipped. The more worshippers a god has, the more mana he accumulates. In **Populous** the god can spend this mana in order to carry out acts of divine intervention. Just about the cheapest act a god can perform is to raise or lower land. So, taking on the role of cosmic bulldozer, a god in **Populous** will spend a lot of time in the early stages of the game ironing out contours or otherwise altering the landscape so as to best influence the growth pattern

of his followers. A god may only build in an area where he has at least one follower, so it is as well to encourage his followers to spread out, which means setting up lots of ledges for mud huts rather than vast open plains for castles. Once a god has secured a goodly number of followers who are providing him with a steady flow of mana he is ready to start building over the sea towards the followers of his rival god. As soon as one of his followers gets in the vicinity of a settlement controlled by the rival tribe, the god can start raising and lowering the landscape to the detriment of his opponent, which is always good for a few curses in a two-player game.

SWAMPED

The decision on when to start crowding your opponent is a key one. The comparative size of the two gods' followings is shown on screen, so you can see whether your guys outnumber the opposition; also you can spy on your opponent's settlements simply by placing your cursor on the 'Book of Worlds' and zooming in. This is a handy ability for as your mana builds up in the middle and end game, you can do more dramatic things than simply raise or lower small segments of land. You can cause an earthquake, infest an area with swamps, spark off a volcano and bring about a flood. Generally, you want to do these nasty things in your opponent's back yard. Earthquakes tend to knock down buildings, swamps degrade settlements and also swallow up walkers who move into them, and volcanoes raise land to a great height and deposit large chunks of rock everywhere making building very difficult. Floods are not nearly so limited in effect, as they raise the sea level over the entire landscape. If most of your followers have settled one building stage above sea level they had better learn to swim very quickly after a flood.

For a real victory point bonanza, you can expend massive amounts of mana staging 'Armageddon'. Here the religious symbols of the rival groups are placed in the middle of the world and the two sides flock towards them and fight to the death. You had better be sure of a clear



numerical advantage before opting for this, however, as once set in motion there is no turning back from 'Armageddon'.

After a somewhat longer description of the game than I had intended giving (a testament to the richness of ideas in this game) I will turn now to the reasons why I believe this game is overrated.

SCAFFOLDING

The main problem you encounter is the need to keep busy, which distracts you from the task of analysing what you have done and what you should be doing next. In the early game at least, you are fully occupied with the scaffolding and bulldozers, rushing around raising and lowering ground, desperately trying to get your tribe's population to grow as quickly as your opponent's. There is a pause facility, but this merely allows you to stop for a cuppa (do gods take a leak?), rather than to sift through data and revise your strategy. This is not a game for chess fans.

Equally frustrating is the amount of stuff which occurs 'offstage' in this game. Contrary to popular opinion a god can't be everywhere at once – well, not in this game he can't. In the middle game when both gods develop the power to spring unpleasant surprises on each other, the effect of these is somewhat diluted by their delayed discovery. A sound effect will generally herald an act of divine intervention (for example, a juddering sound for an earthquake, and a disgusting sucking sound for when a walker becomes a sinker in a swamp) but the program does not automatically highlight the area where this happened. Floods are hard to miss, and land-raising volcanoes appear to show up on the 'Book of Worlds' master map, but swamps and earthquakes are not so noticeable. Quite often you have to stumble across them while 'clicking through' your settlements, checking on their progress. This may be realistic – who can tell, they could hardly call Zeus in as a consultant, could they? – but it is irritating because it soaks up time, and the game is already played at a rush as it is.

The game does not suffer from a variety of strategies to try out, but the lack of om-

niscience and the helter-skelter pace of the game makes it difficult to determine which parts of your strategy were responsible for your success or failure. Ultimately, you end up playing the game not to unravel its strategic problems but for the thrill of 'firefighting' – rushing to fix one crisis after another and in between times wreaking similar havoc on your opponent.

I have read elsewhere that this game is highly addictive, but I found it highly repetitive. Each successive world is different from the previous one as regards terrain and also the range of powers available to your computer opponent, but by and large conquering the world requires the usual routine of flattening land, spreading out fast, accumulating mana for the big strike against your opponent and then a quick visit to the Armageddon Arms for a pint and a punch-up.

Although you take on the role of a god, somehow there is a lack of mystique about this game, and despite the cute graphics, the colourful worlds and the commendably elegant icon-driven game system, this game left me with a less than 'god like' feeling. Instead I felt more like President Reagan; impotent but with a lot of people worshipping me for no apparent reason.

John Harrington

CHARTS

Computer Games

- ① Red Lightning (ST, IBM, SSI)
- ② Storm Over Europe (C64, SSI)
- ③ Waterloo (ST, IBM, Amiga, PSS/Mirrorsoft)
- ④ Battles of Napoleon (C64, SSI)
- ⑤ Fire Brigade (IBM, Amiga, Panther/Mindscape)
- ⑥ Main Battle Tank (IBM, ST, SimCan)
- ⑦ Romance of the Three Kingdoms (IBM, Koei Corp)
- ⑧ Vulcan (ST, IBM, Amiga, CCS)
- ⑨ Panzer Strike (C64, SSI)
- ⑩ Decisive Battles of the American Civil War, Vol 2 (IBM, SSG)

Chart supplied by Strategic Plus Software, PO Box 8, Hampton, Middx TW12 3XA.

JACK NICKLAUS' GREATEST 18 HOLES OF MAJOR CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF

DESIGNER
NED MARTIN

PUBLISHER
ACCOLADE

PRICE £24.95

Game Play: ****

Graphics: ***

Available for Commodore Amiga and IBM PC. Reviewed on Amiga.

There's not a lot you can do with golf games on computers these days. The tried and trusted rear-view, power/direction slide system has no real rivals and apart from that it is down to who has the best graphics and sound effects. For years, various incarnations of the superb *Leaderboard* (US Gold) have had the field sown up and the others really just made up the numbers. Only recently have there been any serious contenders and Jack Nicklaus' *Greatest 18 Holes of Major Championship Golf* is the latest and perhaps the best of the these, despite the ridiculously long title.

POWER SLIDE

For anyone who has played *Leaderboard* or Accolade's earlier *Mean 18*, Jack Nicklaus *Golf* will be second nature. It uses a very similar system of club selection and the power slide is almost identical, although it does have a logarithmic scale which permits a marked improvement in your short game. For those that are unaware how these systems work, the shot is made by three quick, timed clicks on the mouse button. The



first click starts a bar moving along a power scale which is graduated from 0% to 100% power. The second click fixes the desired power level, and the third click, executed as close as possible to the direction line, sets the degree of hook or slice. Above the line hooks the ball, drop below it and you slice. It is a lot easier to do than describe.

With a little practice, you can hit the ball in a reasonably straight line and as proficiency increases it is possible to impart fade and draw as required. This is an area where **Jack Nicklaus Golf** definitely scores over **Leaderboard** as in the latter game it is rather too easy to hit a perfect shot. **Jack Nicklaus Golf** improves the situation by adding a degree of randomness to the ball's flight which, in addition to wind effects, makes it a lot harder to get it right. Unlike **Leaderboard**, it also neatly simulates the all important backspin which enables you to stop the ball quickly on the green, particularly with short irons. Once on the green, putting is carried out on the same scale, with borrow replacing wind. Like the approach shots, putting is quite difficult. Some rather fast greens and vicious breaks don't help matters. As a result, you very rarely sink the long putts, which is again a more realistic treatment.

DIGITISED

Where **Jack Nicklaus Golf** really scores, and loses, is in the graphics department. After a digitised Nicklaus has introduced the hole, each one opens with a superb overhead view, lacking only a distance scale. One click brings you into the main screen and the major flaw of the game. The screen showing the view of the fairway takes anything between five and twenty seconds to fill completely. This is unbelievably slow and I am frankly amazed that Accolade released the game

in this condition. After all, we are talking 16-bit Amiga here, a machine noted for its fast graphics chips. The delay all but ruins the game and means a complete round takes over an hour to play. Even worse is that if you want to see the overhead view, essential for gauging shots, you have to wait for the screen to be redrawn every time. This is an inexcusable failing, but one you will have to live with in order to enjoy the better parts of the game.

The rest of the graphics are excellent. Trees are individually shaped, clouds billow overhead and the fairways are clearly defined, although it is sometimes quite hard to spot the contours of the course, especially on the greens. Not quite so good are the out of bounds areas that are portrayed in a yucky brown colour and the close-up bunker graphics that tend to be rather blocky. The player figure is nicely done and the swing movement is captured extremely well, as are the sound effects.

COMPILATION

Jack Nicklaus Golf comes with three excellent courses, all of which present a challenge. The best of the three is a compilation of Nicklaus' favourite 18 holes from American and British tournament courses. This features holes from Augusta, St Andrews, Pebble Beach, Muirfield and Baltusrol among others and there are some really tough shots to play. Some of the greens are just about impossible, with one at Augusta being so fast that only hitting the hole will stop the ball rolling away down the hill into the water.

The other two courses are real ones from Western USA and are well worth playing. You can choose to tackle the courses as a beginner or pro, or you can assume one of the 'identities' provided who each have their own strengths and weaknesses.

While not being exactly short of a few bob at present, Nicklaus is now engaged in a prosperous second career designing courses around the world. I would have thought therefore that a game proudly carrying his name would have made a point of supplying a course design program. Yes, you guessed, **Leaderboard** provides one as standard. Unfortunately, no such feature is included on the disk and you are stuck with the courses supplied until the inevitable add-on disks appear.

In the end, this is an excellent game that is badly let down by one feature: the painfully slow screen updates. There are several individual touches, especially the realistic shots and the backspin, that make it a better bet than **Leaderboard** and most would agree that the graphics are much more appealing. Given that it is such a similar product to **Leaderboard**, most buyers will be looking for a way of choosing between them. Where **Jack Nicklaus Golf** scores is in its excellent courses, stylish graphics and realistic treatment of shots. It represents proof that **Leaderboard** can be improved upon and were it not for that annoying screen programming, **Jack Nicklaus Golf** would be the best golf simulation so far.

Mike Siggins

EARL WEAVER BASEBALL

DESIGNED BY
EDDIE DOMBROWER,
TERI MASON AND EARL
WEAVER.

PUBLISHED BY
ELECTRONIC ARTS

PRICE £24.95

Game Play: *****

Graphics: *****

Available for the Commodore Amiga and IBM PC. Reviewed on the Amiga.

Earl Weaver Baseball (EWB) is pretty similar to boardgame stat replay games in that it is based on real players' statistics and thus allows the usual replay situations, anachronistic matchups and easily modified player characteristics, but with several vital innovations. Firstly, it is en-

dowed with split screen graphics that are about the best I've seen. The display even surpasses the graphical benchmark **Hardball** (Accolade) in many respects. This is probably because as well as the strategy mode, **EWB** can also be played as an arcade game which is a free, but unused, bonus as far as I'm concerned.

ASK EARL

The second major benefit is having, at last, an intelligent opponent for one player games in the shape of Earl Weaver, a rather successful major league manager with the Baltimore Orioles, whose undoubted baseball skills have been captured in silicon for this game. Even Weaver's opponent (that is, the player) has the option to 'Ask Earl' for advice at any time. The built-in playbook then suggests whether you should, for instance, play the infield shallow or to use the Run & Hit (Weaver hates the Hit & Run, though you can call it if you wish). You can of course override him on any number of tactical decisions but more often than not his choice is 'correct'. Of course it is also possible to play the game against another player which is always a useful touch and essential for replay gamers who aren't all loners despite what some may think.

All this is great, but even better is the element that means you can set **EWB** to autopilot (that is, Earl manages both sides) and watch a pitch-by-pitch game for fun. The superb animation of the players is done by one Eddie Dombrower. Who? Mr Dombrower implemented one of the first ever graphical ballet notation systems on computer and thus knows a bit about the human form and motion thereof. What results is not a bunch of shortstops posturing like Nureyev but an animated spectacle that comes very close to looking like the real thing as far as pitching, double plays and the like go. Amazing stuff. With the addition of a frame by frame instant replay and digitised sound it's enough to make you crave a jumbo dog with extra relish and start crooning 'Take me out to the ball park...'

The game system itself is extremely simple to use yet seems to offer all the features you will ever require. The game starts with an options screen that lets you set all the usual stuff like mouse or joystick, team names, line-up and ground choice. Pretty quickly you are into the main game which can be set up to play either pitch by pitch (more detailed but much longer) or 'one pitch' resolution where each bat is resolved normally but you only get to see the crucial pitch and



resulting play or out. Everything else from there on in is like playing a board game except all you have to do is make the decisions and watch the action unfold.

ESOTERICA

There are two substantial charts of tactical options for you to select from which cover the usual bunts, steals, infield placing and substitutions but **EWB**, true to form, also offers important esoterica like holding the runner on or executing outfield shifts. Electronic Arts have not left much out of this game and it is a treat for the baseball fan.

There are features that enable one to trade, edit and 'clone' players which can be from real life or completely fictional. This enables draft leagues to be run with the minimum of effort. Each player has a stats card that is so comprehensive that I needed three separate stats books to compile each player on the 1988 All Star Teams - it covers every conceivable aspect from slugging average to fielding range and arm strength, all of which are presumably factored into the game system. Very comprehensive game statistics are generated automatically and are saved on a cumulative database which should appeal to the statistics freaks out there and reports can be printed out with no problems. The game comes complete with several famous teams of the past and a 1988 season disk is available for a nominal sum with every active major league player featured. Teams can be edited and have their kit colours changed; there is a stadium designing utility or you can choose from any number of pre-designed grounds.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

As ever with games of this sort, it is hard to know whether the game system is ac-

curate or not as all the number crunching goes on in the background. Unless one goes the whole way through a season to check the stats, the player is left with only the brief overview to see if the game 'feels' right.

To check the atmosphere, I have replayed several games including the '88 Series (surely the most replayable series for years, where I have yet to see the Dodgers win) and also several All Star games. I found them all, in a statistical sense, to be realistic with no apparent anomalies and also found the results to be remarkably true to life with Dwight Gooden clocking 96mph pitches (I forget the Radar Gun feature) and Mike Schmidt striking out a lot but hitting frequent homers.

There aren't too many baseball games available in the UK and many of those that are on the shelves are purely arcade based. If you like the latter type of game I need do no more than recommend the superb **Hardball** (Accolade) but for those looking for strategy or statistical replay features, you would be hard put to better 'Weaverball'.

One can only hope that, with the slow but steady growth of baseball proper in the UK, more computer baseball games of this standard will appear.

We may even get to the situation where classy stats games like **Pursue the Pennant** and Lance Haffner's little gems are generally available as opposed to on import as at present. Overall then, **Earl Weaver Baseball** is an excellent game offering much, much more than a stats based replay and should be a required purchase for baseball fans.

Mike Siggins

MILLENNIUM 2.2

DESIGNED BY
IAN BIRD

PUBLISHED BY
ELECTRIC DREAMS

PRICE £15

Game Play: ****

Graphics: ****

Available for the Atari ST and the Commodore Amiga. Reviewed on the Amiga.

Millennium 2.2 is, as it claims, an incredibly addictive game. The basic scenario is simple: Earth has been devastated by a meteor collision and only the moonbase survives along with an unfriendly colony on Mars. As the moonbase commander you must colonise the solar system, principally the moons of Saturn and Jupiter, while defending the moonbase and your colonies from the enemy Martians. Simple.

So, you look at the screen and, bemused by the apparent complexity of the layout, reach for the instructions. Then you discover that the 17 page book contains only four pages of English: two setting the scenario and the other two explaining the game mechanics and screen layout.

Along the top of the screen you have ten small windows which drive the main screen menu. Everything is mouse controlled apart from the fighters, which are joystick controlled. Two of the windows advance the time by hour or day, another allows you to load or save games. The remainder allow access to your colonies, the moonbase, craft roster, a database (information about suitable colony sites), a bulletin board showing the last five or six events, a log showing your civilisation progression and a zoom out facility to look at the inner or outer solar system.

MOONBASE SEVEN

On the moonbase you have seven departments: Resources (your mining capacity), Research, Production, Life Support, Energy, Defence and your Flight bays. Any colonies founded have everything except the Research and Production units. Therefore the moonbase Research and Production have to provide everything your civilisation needs.

So off you go. First of all you engage your Mk 1 generator, start the research on your Mk 2, and begin mining material to build it with. As you research and build successive generators you also research and build the other equipment you require: probes to be sent out to find potential colony sites, grazers to

extract additional minerals from the asteroid belt, extra life support modules to increase the moonbase population and fighters to defend the moon and colonies against the Martian attacks. This is the point where the arcade element comes in, as you suddenly have to go out and try to shoot down the enemy spacecraft.

Like all good adventure games there are some neat twists along the way. You are not aware of all the events and some deadly surprises are sprung as the game progresses. I underestimated the game's cerebral element and nearly came a cropper on several occasions. Once you start, this new computer 'jigsaw' will consume spare time without respite. The graphics are excellent too.

What, then, are its negative points? Firstly it has a serious defect which can cause no end of problems. The game has an end: my first one started in Jan 2200 and finished in Mar 2214. With only a day or hour advance that is a lot of mouse clicks without all the other clicks in between needed to load, unload, land spaceships, start up production and so on.

The trouble is that the software has a tendency to crash: if you inadvertently double click on certain screens a character 'O' appears in the middle of the screen showing the outer solar system, and the game is lost. This means the game requires saving at frequent intervals if you are not to lose a whole evening's play. There are also long periods when not a lot happens because as you colonise more distant planets and their moons, the travel time for cargo ships between them and moonbase increases dramatically. Conversely, when you acquire a lot of spaceships and closer colonies, the operations required to land, load or unload, and turn round a ship become tedious.

Your grazers take 22 days to travel to and from the moonbase to the asteroid belt. If



you have upwards of 20 such craft then unless you convoy them, the landing and turn round process has to be executed on average every four days. Also, your colonisation plan is based, one assumes, on the mineral requirements for production. There is only one planet or moon which can provide a crucial mineral, so if you don't send a probe out to it early on, you're bugged. One of the 'minerals' is Methane, yet I can't find anything on the production list which requires it.

SAME EVERY TIME

As with all adventure games, your line of reasoning may not coincide with the designer's, and this can be irritating, especially when you think your logic is superior. Having played the first few years several times owing to crashes, there doesn't appear to be any random element in the sequence of events. So, you become aware of all the events and the order in which they occur. Obviously this completely alters your game strategy the second time around. A single disk will save up to four games, but I deliberately resisted the temptation to replay a section of the game the first time through; my civilisation had to live with my mistakes.

The Research department rapidly becomes redundant apart from new projects fed to it at set intervals during the game. Almost regardless of how you play, all your research will be finished within the first year and therefore it doesn't seem to be a restricting factor in progression.

However, apart from the aforementioned reservations it remains, after **Dungeon Master**, the best game I've purchased in a long stretch, and I thoroughly recommend it, especially with the nights closing in and winter approaching. (*I thought you lived in Southend, not Sweden - Ed*)

Kevin Warne

WATERLOO

DESIGNED BY
PETER TURCAN

PUBLISHED BY
PSS

PRICE £29.99

Game Play: ***

Graphics: **

Available for the IBM PC, Atari ST and Commodore Amiga. Reviewed on the ST, screen shots from the PC.

If it's Sunday 18th June 1815, this must be Belgium. Mud everywhere after a night of heavy rain, the Duke of Wellington to the north with 68 000 men, Napoleon Bonaparte to the south with 72 000. Half a mile to the north, the village of Waterloo . . .

The battle was lost rather than won. Napoleon let Marshal Ney make a hash of things, and discounted the possibility of Blucher's Prussians coming on late. Wellington, a master of defence, just let the French come to him. Of course, it wasn't as easy as all that.

WHAT YOU SEE . . .

Waterloo lets you get involved, as the protagonist of your choice. A 'conventional' computer wargame is conducted much as you would play on a board, moving units around hexes or squares, and letting the computer resolve combat. Computer wargames score in their ability to introduce elements of wargaming not normally available, hidden movement, for example. (Of course, the other big advantage is that you can still get a game even when you can't coax a human opponent to come out on a wet Wednesday!) There are drawbacks, though, not least of which is not being able to see the whole map at once.

The game comes in a fairly standard box, about 6" by 5", and contains the disk, a plastic coated map of the battlefield, and a substantial booklet (over 100 pages) which contains the player's guide and an extensive historical background section.

Where *Waterloo* and *Borodino*, its predecessor by the same author, differ, is

that you find yourself in the position of the Commander-in-chief, with the same limitations as you would have experienced were you actually there. Orders are executed by your generals and their subordinates, according to your directions or their own initiative, should you have left them to their own devices. And in the heat of battle, orders can be misinterpreted . . . You can't see everything that's going on, and at a distance, you can't be positive of what it is that you're looking at! Lastly, as riders have to be sent out to carry these carefully crafted orders, it can take some time for the recipient to receive them. These functions make for a game rather different to the usual computer wargame.

LAST ORDERS

Orders are input using an adventure-style interface. When you want to tell someone to do something, you type your order and it will be sent out, once you've satisfied the syntax requirements. Once you become more adept at handling your forces, you may want to get more involved. Instead of allowing your commanders to do the detailed work, you could send orders like 'Lobau, form a defence line from 1/2 mile south of Fricermont linking with D'Erlon to the east flank' (to take an example from the Player's guide). The guide suggests that you be sure that you know what you're doing before you try orders like this. Certainly I haven't yet reached the point where I'd try it with any confidence.

The display shows you a perspective view of the scene in front of you; units are distinguishable up to a range of about two miles. You can view the situation from any individual or location, but the full simulation would require you to be limited to your personal viewpoint. The divisions themselves are represented as 3D blocks in different colours. You can identify any feature by pointing and clicking with the mouse, whereupon you are told that it 'looks like . . .' whatever it is. The handbook doesn't say, but I suspect that the further away the unit is, the more likelihood there is of a mistake in this message. It's a pity that the colour-coding is not documented somewhere accessible – it's irritating having to point and click all the time.

So what happens when you play the game? For my first effort I decided to be Wellington (start off as a winner, I thought). I opted to let my commanders handle most of the decisions and to intervene only when one or another asked for assistance. I rapidly learned to note on the map the last reported positions of my forces. Everything seemed to be going

pretty well to begin with. The French attacked my right, but I knew it was a feint (having opted for the computer to play according to history) and resisted the temptation to move my men from the centre, where I knew the main thrust was coming. Everything seemed to be going OK as I watched the French advance and then the bombshell (or something) hit me.

DEAD UNLUCKY

When it was next my turn to order, the screen went green and I read a message to the effect that I was now 'disorganised' and could not order this turn. I take this to be a euphemism for 'dead', since I was unable to play any further part. In fact I went to bed and discovered the following morning that I'd been soundly thrashed! Subsequent games, played from both sides, have yet to yield a victory, although there has been, to quote Wellington, 'a damned close-run thing'.

This is a marvellous simulation of a battle which was a pivotal point in history, and I am impressed with the quality of the programming. It is not, however, a great game, being beset by weak points in implementation which detract from the overall effect. Messages from the computer are removed from the screen after 20 seconds, whether you have read and understood them or not, although this did at least allow me to ignore the thing and let it run to a conclusion once 'killed'.

The user interface is a pain. You are restricted to eight orders per 15-minute game segment. I have yet to need all of them. This is at least in part due to having to work out what order to type and then key it all in. When all orders have been issued, the screen is redrawn to show the situation 15 minutes on. A lot can happen in fifteen minutes, and it can be difficult, particularly given the similarity between units' appearances, to figure out exactly what has occurred. The program does not respond as quickly as I would have liked, and completing the whole battle can take upwards of five hours – even more if you issue a lot of complicated orders.

If you are a student of military history, or you have always wanted to experience the problems of command for yourself then this may be just what you are looking for and I suggest that you may want to add one, if not two stars to the rating. If you are a computer-owning board wargamer, and enjoy the more 'usual' style, then I suggest that you try *Waterloo* before splashing out on it.

Mike Woodhouse

LETTERS

Subjective matter

I'd like to comment on Brian Walker's review of *Oppression* in issue 7. You should resist the notion that a game on a subject trivialises the subject. Think of other art forms: you wouldn't automatically say that a novel or a movie trivialises its subject matter (maybe that's a bad example because a lot of people do object to movies on certain subjects). I heard about the flap during the Falklands War over a game about that war. That game was quickly suppressed. Did anyone speak out for the right of a game to tackle a subject?

Robert Abbott

New York City, NY 10038 USA

In the review to which you refer, I left the notion of trivialisation as an open question. I certainly did not suggest that games trivialise a subject per se.

Are games an art form? I doubt it. The function of art is to provide a distancing mechanism for reality to be reviewed 'objectively', thus providing a means to make sense of the world around us. Games, by their very nature, are competitive and as such tend to simulate reality.

As to your last point: most games, such as your own, set out to solve a series of problems. The subject matter is often an afterthought. In any event, how does one reconcile the concept of absolute freedom (to tackle a subject), with, say, the spate of illegal computer games, produced by neo-Nazi groups, that have appeared in Germany in which players are rewarded for killing immigrants and Jews?

Watch out

As I hope many of your readers spotted, in my selection of Desert Island Games I credited that talented games inventor Robert 'Elusis' Abbott with *Lines of Action* when, of course it should have been Claude Soucie. This was purely a slip of the fingers because I knew full-well that LOA was Claude's game.

In fact, I endeavoured to track down any other Claude Soucie games but found only one. It is called *Watch* published by MPH Games in America (the MPH, by the way, stands not for miles per hour but Make People Happy!). I believe the game might still be available: until not too long ago it cost just \$5 I seem to remember. I urge any keen collector to look out for it. It takes just minutes to play and is one of

REBOUND



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House, 23a High Street,
Ealing, London W5 5DF

the few games that could end even before the first move is made!

Derek Carver

Oxshott, Surrey KT22 0SW

Error routine

Why should we gamers have to put up with errata sheets in our games? Indeed, the ASL rule book actually 'boasts' that you can send off coupons for the latest rule changes.

It can only be incompetence on a grand scale that caused FASA to leave tables and counters out of their *Star Trek Combat Simulation* game. And this was the revised 2nd Edition! I also purchased GDW's *Air Superiority*, only to discover a massive four page errata sheet – not so much an errata sheet as a comedy of errors! I appreciate that most of it pertains to the sequel, *Air Strike*, but how did vast chunks of the rule book get left out in the first place?

Sure, I want to play the games properly, but I also don't want to write on my data cards, or stick paper over them, or glue tables into my rule books (this was FASA's suggestion). Especially when I'm shelling out good money for a 'professional' product. Surely we need a closer liaison between the designers, researchers and proofreaders to ensure things don't get left out?

As for *Air Superiority* (which I bought on Lee Brimmicombe-Wood's recommendation), I have a query regarding gun combat. If the number of shots for a plane is four, this means four two-second

bursts, which I understand. But does this also mean four shots during the whole game, and if a plane has twin cannon does this four apply to both of them together, or should I double the number of shots to eight (four for each cannon, two cannon)? In the game's favour, I applaud the 'programmed instruction' method of learning, and look forward to many hours of enjoyable flying.

Stephen Prosser

Caswell, Swansea SA3 4RU

Your comments about errata will be the subject of our Forum feature in the next issue.

Regarding your Air Superiority rule query; we would prefer such questions to be sent direct to the game's publishers in future. However, we can tell you that: 1) Yes you only get four shots per game, though you are allowed half shots, or snapshots as the rule book refers to them. 2) No, you do not double the number of shots for twin cannon planes.

Parollel

I would like to draw a parallel between role-playing as it is now, and science fiction in the fifties when it suffered a boom. I say 'suffered' because when were all those awful SF films shown late night made? Right, the fifties. They had spin offs, licences, magazines starting and folding every month, every hack churning the stuff out, and all the other delights role-players have to put up with now. Eventually it strangled itself, and the poor view the outside world has of SF was the only long term result. I suspect role-playing is heading the same way. The good news is that when the market crashed, all the money spinners and hacks left, and only the dedicated writers and fans stayed in the field. The quality of SF improved (such radical ideas as 'characterisation' were introduced at this time). Fanzines flourished as there were so few prozines. Maybe there is hope for Real Role-playing after all.

Steve G Jones

Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 0RT

Roar of the dragon

I declare an interest: I am a director of Red Dragon Games, who produce *Quadromania*, reviewed by David Wells (issue 7, p31). I had nothing to do with the invention of the game: nothing David Wells says can hurt my *amour propre*.

It was appropriate that your editorial on the Review Section began by announcing

that it was the silly season. Was it absolutely necessary to prove it in your review of *Quadromania*? Design, board size, error in the notation of an example and the like are matters of legitimate comment; as also would be an attack on the substance of the game – if it were accurate. It would be legitimate to say the rules were difficult to understand (if indeed they were), but to purport to understand the rules and then rubbish the game is not. Although there are only eight moves a side, the number of different games (not allowing for 'mirrored' effects) is $(16!)^2$, a very very large number.

Let us play a game *à la* Wells and see what it does for the second (Shapes) player he is advising. Player One (Colours) plays (say) red square to B2. You (Shapes) play, as directed, green triangle to C3. Player One plays blue square to B3 – good play, it blocks a Shape row on B and a Shape quad on B2, B3, C2, C3. Wells directs player Two to play yellow triangle to B2. Result, immediate score for player One (Colours), and blockage of your own play on row C. Marvellous – for your opponent. And, if such a game is continued, the consequences of his advice are disastrous.

Come, come! A review, whether fair or unfair, should at least be competent, and your review isn't. Tell you what: let David Wells take on Graham Ellsbury, the inventor, with the loser paying an agreed sum to charity – Greenpeace? After all, on Mr Wells's reckoning, it'll only take a few minutes of his time, and he won't have to think. David Wells's final thrust – good journalism, doubtless – that our motto 'I think, therefore I play' generated the response 'Not *Quadromania* I don't!' clearly requires the rejoinder that, although he may have played, alas! he did not think. Pity.

John Lloyd
Red Dragon Games
Pembroke Dock SA72 4RS

David Wells replies:

I own up to being mistaken in thinking there was a simple matching strategy for the second player. Serves me right for trying to be a clever dick. However, I stand by the other points made in my review, especially the main point: how much strategy and tactics can there be in an eight move game on a four by four board?

John Lloyd claims that $(16!)^2$ is 'a very very large number.' This only goes to prove that I am not the only one who hasn't been thinking hard enough! In the

context of abstract games it is a very very tiny number compared to the number of moves in chess or go or any of the established and very good abstract games on the market. And that was my chief objection to the game.

I simply do not believe that it is a 'superlative new strategy game', 'without parallel'. (You don't need GCSE French to spot the claim in the first line of the French rules.) I think it is a small (in every respect except the size of the box and the claims made for it), short and snappy game of tactics, for which suitably modest claims might reasonably be made.

Red Dragon Games, by following the usual practice of praising their own game to the skies, promote the cynicism of the game-playing public, do the inventor a disservice, and force reviewers, who have their own responsibility to readers, to severely criticise games which simply do not match up to the claims made for them.

Space wars

If you manage another 8 pages in the magazine would it be possible to include more reviews/strategic articles on classic games rather than computer games – I feel there is too much specialised material in GI already (ie wargames, rolegames).

Neil Roberts
Worsley, Manchester M28 4GE

See next letter.

I've been concerned lately at the number of your readers who resent the amount of space given over to rolegaming. Yes, there are a number of magazines which cover the field, but their quality is lamentable. For example, *GM* is a joke. It's simplistic, repetitive (is this because the writers know nothing about rolegames?) and games get uniformly good reviews which are independent of their quality (however they get a lot more advertising than you!).

Dragon reviews are fitful and only partially cover the games available. Nevertheless quite a good job is done. The rest of *Dragon* is almost totally given over to modifications and additions to *AD&D*.

Needless to say yours is by far the best games magazine. The writing is so good that I read all articles even though I rarely play board games and never play wargames. It would never occur to me to complain about wargamers being already well catered for by numerous magazines.

Why is D A Segal so upset about the treatment of *Robotech II*? The vast majority of Siembieda's games (he does write a lot of them) are derivative when not being outright copies of other games. Have you noticed how well the word *Robotech* rhymes with *Battletech*?

Any games companies out there wondering why the market for rolegames is so small might look up the phrase 'market saturation' in a text book on marketing, and ask themselves if their products have to copy each other as incestuously as they do while also ignoring the vast majority of potential gamers.

Mark Pawelek
Linden Grove, London SE15 3LH

Pluck of the Irish

I am impressed with your magazine and probably because I'm Irish I have not been afraid to take out a year's subscription. I find your articles on certain game themes very interesting: election games, race games etc. Could I suggest an in depth look at railway games and please could you cover *C&O*, *B&O* as having read about this game years ago in *Games & Puzzles* it sounds a bit special. I was also interested to learn that *Crude* could be worth £300+ as I have a copy in good nick. You may want to consider a feature on collector's items as I am certain many avid gamers like myself would be astounded at possible values placed on some games.

Cecil Worthington
Bangor, Co Down BT20 4JZ

C&O, B&O is a real turkey. Its reputation is based on its obscurity, and the fact that it was published by Avalon Hill. If you like railway games you should enjoy our piece on 1830 in this issue.

Puzzled of Ireland

I am writing this letter to you in the hope that I can get information on how to solve the Rubik cube. I can do the other puzzle Mr Rubik designed – Rubik Magic, but I still can't solve the cube. Some friends of mine said that Rubik published a booklet on the cube containing the solution to the mind boggling puzzle, but I cannot obtain it or anybody else who can work it out. Can you help?

Tony Slattery
Donoughmore, Lisronagh,
Clonmel, Co Tipperary, Ireland.

No. We're much too thick. Perhaps some of our readers can help?

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GAMES PLAYERS wanted to form club, Stoke-on-Trent/South Cheshire Areas, ☎ 0782 720114.

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WOTTACON January 1990 in Central London. A one day convention organised by the Guild of Melee and Magic. Stay tuned for further details.

CAMPAIGN 90. May 12-13, 1990 at Waughton Campus, Milton Keynes. Contact Dean Bass, 14 Skeats Wharf, Pennyland, Milton Keynes MK15 8AY.

CONJUNCTION. July 27-29, July 1990 at New Hall College, Cambridge. Relaxed rolegame convention organised like an SF con rather than a selling exercise. Probably similar to the late, lamented KoanCon. Contact Conjunction, c/o 25 Wycliffe Road, Cambridge CB1 3JD.

EUROPE

SPIEL '89, the Essen Games Fair with expanded Interteam tournament, at the Gruganhalle, Essen from the October 19-22, 1989.

NORTH AMERICA

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GAMES MEETING every Tuesday at the Bun Shop Pub, Berrylands Rd. Surbiton. 7pm till closing time. Wide variety of board games and role-playing games.

GLC (R.I.P.) Wargames Club meets alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays (May 3, 11, 17, 25, 31) in room 88, County Hall, on the South Bank, SE1 (nearest tubes Embankment and Waterloo). 6.30 till 10.00pm. Minatures, two player board wargames, **Warhammer 40k**, **Pax Britannica**, 1830, etc.

KCPFRPG, North London, have meetings every Monday, from 6.30pm to 9.45pm. If you're human, elf, dwarf or just about any other race, and you're between 16 and 25, then contact us straight away. We play **AD&D**, **Rolemaster/MERP**, **Marvel Superheroes**, **Robotech**, **Call of Cthulhu** and other games. Experienced and non experienced players welcome. Contact Bil, Naomi or Vince ☎ 01-253 6776. Or write to Darren Rogers, c/o KCPFRPG, 92 Central Street, London EC1V.

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NOTTINGHAM AND DERBY Games Club meets every Thursday at the Queens Walk Community Centre, The Meadows, Nottingham. 7-10.30pm. Contact Mick Haytack ☎ 0332 511898.

SIGMA GAMES CLUB meets every 2nd, 4th, and 5th (if applicable) Sunday of the month at the Intervarsity Club, Bedford Chambers, King St, Covent Garden, London. 3-10.30pm. Games played include **Empire Builder**, **Talisman**, **Titan**, 1830, and many more.



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